

AN ANALYSIS OF THE EXTENT TO WHICH  
HUMOR IS ACCEPTED AND EMPLOYED  
IN THE WORKPLACE  
FOR THE ENHANCEMENT OF  
PRODUCTIVITY AND CREATIVITY

THESIS

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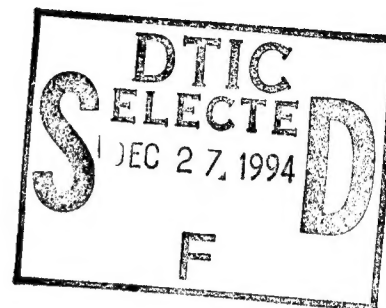
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Presented to the Faculty of the  
School of Logistics and Acquisition Management  
Of the Air Force Institute of Technology  
Air University

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of  
Master of Science In Software Systems Management

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## Preface

This study assesses the extent to which humor is both accepted and employed in the workplace and highlights the perceived organizational benefits that can be realized by its presence. A major goal was to highlight the potential that humor possesses as a management tool for enhancing both the productivity and creativity of the workforce. The findings of this research are pertinent to any manager who is concerned about humor in the workplace, or the productivity and creativity of the workforce.

Extensive work was performed to develop a comprehensive survey that would be applicable to individuals employed in manufacturing, research and development, and service organizations. Due to the exploratory nature of this research, the survey was developed to measure individual perceptions, and did not seek to develop a correlation between levels of humor and *actual* levels of productivity and creativity. As such, the findings of this research serve as an impetus for future research of the correlation between levels of workplace humor and actual levels of productivity and creativity.

In completing our research, we received a significant amount of help from several people. First, we would like to thank our advisors, Major Scott Graham and Lieutenant Colonel Dave Murphy, for their undying support of the topic and countless hours of review and critique. We would also like to thank Dr. Dan Reynolds, Professor of Statistics and Probability, for his help in identifying the appropriate statistical methodology for evaluating our data. We also thank the organizations and individuals that took the time and effort to participate in our survey. Finally, we would like to thank our families and friends for their understanding, encouragement, and support.

Jonathan R. Specht and Paul D. Tobin

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## **Abstract**

Today's business literature is filled with discussions of the many benefits humor can bring to the work environment. Two of these purported benefits, namely, the enhancement of workplace productivity and the enhancement of workplace creativity, have attracted the attention of modern managers challenged with keeping their organizations competitive despite dwindling financial and human resources. Unfortunately, little research has been done to date which actually demonstrates a link between the existence of workplace humor and improved levels of productivity and creativity. Without this demonstration of causality, most managers are reluctant to invest corporate resources in pursuit of workplace humor despite its many purported advantages. As a first step to establishing this relationship, the focus of this exploratory research was to assess the level of employee and management acceptance of workplace humor and to evaluate employee opinions regarding humor's potential to enhance productivity and creativity. The research also evaluated the effect of various moderating variables, including organizational size, type of industry, gender, age and employee level. Using data gathered via a mail survey, the researchers employed Chi-Square contingency table analyses to evaluate the effects of these moderating variables on employee attitudes regarding workplace humor. The study provides a foundation for further research into the relationship between workplace humor and productivity and creativity.

# **AN ANALYSIS OF THE EXTENT TO WHICH HUMOR IS ACCEPTED AND EMPLOYED IN THE WORKPLACE FOR THE ENHANCEMENT OF PRODUCTIVITY AND CREATIVITY**

## **I. Introduction**

### ***1.1 Executive Summary***

This thesis examines the potential utility of humor in the workplace as a management tool for enhancing worker productivity and creativity. This preliminary research investigates the perceptions of workplace humor held by employees at all levels of organizations in three market areas: Research and Development, Manufacturing, and Service. Specifically, the study examines the extent to which workers and managers feel humor currently exists in their work environment, if it is appropriate, and if it has any potential impact on productivity and creativity.

The present day business environment has placed considerable strain on managers, as increasing competition and shrinking budgets force organizations to find ways to "do more with less". The ensuing scramble has placed humor in the spotlight as a means to bolster worker morale, productivity, and creativity, while simultaneously improving workgroup cohesion and reducing absenteeism. However, little empirical research has been done to verify these claims. As a precursor to conducting such research, our study concentrates on assessing levels of humor currently found in the work environment, and gauges levels of employee acceptance of workplace humor both in general and as a management tool for enhancing productivity and creativity.

## **1.2 General Issue**

In the current era of unprecedented global competition and technological growth, organizations face significant challenges in maintaining their viability and health. Today's improved communication and transportation systems facilitate intercontinental trade on a global scale, giving rise to stiff international and domestic competition in almost every market. Add to this the economic downturn the US economy experienced in the late 1980's and the resulting environment is one which leaves little room for weak, inefficient companies and which constantly challenges managers to find new ways to maintain a competitive edge. To meet these challenges and survive in this aggressive environment, managers are seeking innovative tools which can be implemented in their current organizational structure that will help their organizations do more with less. Often, some streamlining is accomplished by downsizing the workforce; other downsizing efforts by US companies have included plant closings, consolidations, and outright elimination of entire divisions. Between 1980 and 1990 alone, the nation's *Fortune* 500 companies reduced their workforce by an amazing 4 million employees (BNA, 1991:1-2). Yet, despite these reductions, managers are still striving to maintain or increase their organization's productivity. It is through the combined effects of downsizing and increasing productivity that managers hope to maintain a competitive position (Rose, 1994).

Increased competition represents only a part of the challenge confronting today's manager. A second challenge stems from the explosive technological growth which presents new tools to the business world on an almost daily basis. Generally, these technology-based business tools offer organizations powerful new ways to conduct business more efficiently. Capitalizing on them, however, requires that an organization's management remain alert to their arrival on the business scene, and be willing to readily



incorporate them should they prove valuable. If an organization neglects to take advantage of new technology, it will surely fall behind its competitors that do take advantage of it. The rapid pace of business system development, then, demands that management foster a creative, dynamic internal environment so that innovative applications may be found for new technologies. And while creativity may represent a key element in the successful application of technology, it is an intrinsically human commodity, and therefore it must be cultivated from an organization's human resources. In today's workplace, businesses are finding that their chief assets are information, knowledge, and creativity; the emphasis has shifted from financial capital to human capital (Ross, 1988: 24).

To meet the challenges of simultaneously increasing both productivity and creativity, it is apparent that management must acknowledge the importance of effective human resource management, for it is through the efforts of an organization's people that its goals are realized. Business managers are realizing that motivated, creative, and productive people are an essential component of any healthy company.

Despite management's realization of the importance of human resources, many organizations are turning to staffing cuts in an effort to reduce labor costs. Unfortunately, these cuts often introduce pitfalls which threaten the critical elements of creativity and productivity. As companies draw down the work force, remaining employees often feel threatened and demoralized. Compounding the problem is the fact that these same individuals are often being tasked with significantly more responsibility as the organization seeks to achieve even more productivity from the smaller pool of workers. Researchers report that the initial productivity gains that are realized by workforce reductions are often offset by long term costs resulting from worker burnout, the departure of some of the best people, and the remaining dispirited workforce (Rose, 1994). The employees may begin to feel over-tasked, under-appreciated, and threatened with the prospect of losing their job

if their performance does not achieve the expected levels. With this attitude, the creative, productive environment that the company had hoped for is all but lost.

These challenges are not confined to managers of civilian organizations; managers in the Department of Defense (DOD) are also grappling with budget reductions and force drawdowns. Sluggish economic conditions and the perceived end of the Cold War have led to decreased government spending on defense. Human resources have been slashed at an astounding rate in the four services over the past few years, and this trend is projected to continue into the foreseeable future. The Pentagon's net loss of active duty personnel in 1994 is projected at 7800 per month, coupled with a net loss of 1165 civilians per month during the same period. Projections for 1995 under the Clinton plan are for 7100 active duty military losses per month and 4100 civilian losses per month (Budget's Impact..., 1994). Just as in the civilian sector drawdowns, the DOD's workforce reductions are resulting in greater responsibilities and their attendant anxieties for the remaining employees.

With these budgetary and workforce cutbacks, both military and civilian managers are faced with the challenge of enhancing productivity and creativity within their organizations. For many of these managers, part of the answer may lie in injecting humor into the work environment. Humor has received considerable press in management circles recently for its potential utility as a creativity catalyst (Barsoux, 1993:36; Bolman and Deal, 1992:41; Buhler, 1991:21; Ross, 1989:39). In addition, humor may promote feelings of good will, decrease anxiety, and increase job satisfaction and organizational commitment, all of which, in turn, may enhance productivity (Barsoux, 1993:181; Duncan, 1982:136; Malone 1980:360). Malone, in fact, (1980:360) contends that humor is a virtually undeveloped resource that can significantly enhance the satisfaction and productivity of employees. Smeltzer and Leap (1988:296) also report that a significant and relevant benefit of humor is that it can promote stability in the face of organizational

change. If the assertions of these researchers are true, humor could serve to partially counteract the negative emotional impacts of organizational restructuring and downsizing while bolstering creativity, enthusiasm, and productivity. In fact, in these unstable times, the failure to nourish and encourage lightness in the workplace may actually undermine productivity, creativity, adaptability, and morale (McKenna, 1992:19). Buhler (1991:21) asserts that the astute manager of the 90's will recognize the importance of humor in the workplace, and take a proactive approach to realize its benefits. It is for these reasons that humor warrants careful consideration and further investigation as a management tool.

### ***1.3 Justification***

As previously indicated, several authors have proposed that workplace humor may offer a variety of benefits, but few have done more than suggest that these benefits exist. For humor to be accepted as a management tool, it is imperative that these claims be substantiated. Demonstrating some correlation between the application of humor by an organization's management and the subsequent realization of its purported benefits is therefore an attractive research objective. Unfortunately, very little empirical data has been gathered to even establish a basis for conducting such research; for example, we found no studies which even examined the extent to which humor currently exists in different work environments. The prospect of demonstrating a relationship between humor and productivity is further complicated by the fact that, thus far, limited attention has been given to the importance of workplace humor by most managers. Humor is considered a "soft" discipline, and is often overlooked by managers intent on getting down to the business of streamlining their organizations. Additionally, exactly what constitutes an appropriate application of humor in the workplace is not widely understood; many managers view workplace humor apprehensively, fearing that it may elicit complaints of sexual harassment, discrimination, or condescension, or may otherwise be deemed

unprofessional and counterproductive. These factors may in part explain why humor is still not widely acknowledged as a management tool, even though some organizations have effectively implemented humor in the hopes of realizing gains in productivity and creativity.

In light of the limited acknowledgment of humor as a viable management tool, attempting to assess the correlation between humor and its purported effects seems premature at this time. Instead, we determined that assessing the extent to which humor is accepted and employed in the work environment is a necessary first step. Doing so will provide an essential point of departure for further research.

#### ***1.4 Research Objectives***

The primary objective of this research was to assess the extent to which humor is accepted and employed in the work environment. In evaluating the level of acceptance, we also sought to determine employees' perceptions of the impact of humor on productivity and creativity. A secondary objective was to determine the extent to which management deliberately employs humor as a catalyst for productivity and creativity. Since so little empirical data has been gathered to date in the area of workplace humor, we have designed our exploratory research to collect such data.

#### ***1.5 Investigative Questions***

The following investigative questions were developed to assist in the fulfillment of our research objectives:

- 1) To what extent is humor in the workplace accepted by the workers and managers?
  - A) To what extent is it actively promoted/stifled by management?

- 2) To what extent does humor currently exist in the workplace?
  - A) In what *forms* does humor exist in the workplace?
- 3) To what extent do worker's perceive that humor has an affect on:
  - A) Productivity?
  - B) Creativity?
  - C) Other?
- 4) To what extent does management employ humor as a catalyst for productivity/creativity?
- 5) To what extent do the following moderating variables affect the acceptance and employment of workplace humor?
  - A) Organizational Variables
    - 1) Size
    - 2) Type of industry
  - B) Individual Variables
    - 1) Gender
    - 2) Age
    - 3) Education Level
    - 4) Ethnic Background
    - 5) Length of employment with the organization
    - 6) Level within the organization
    - 7) Length of time in current position
    - 8) Average number of people interacted with daily

## **II. Literature Review**

### ***2.1 Introduction***

This research attempts to characterize the extent to which humor is accepted and employed in the workplace for the potential enhancement of productivity and creativity. To meet this objective, we felt that it was first necessary to review all of the relevant literature on humor. As such, this literature review is presented in several topical areas progressing from the general issue of defining humor to the specific discussion and exemplification of the application of humor in the workplace.

Starting from the more general perspective, we first provide a discussion of the current issues surrounding the definition of humor, noting the lack of a universally accepted definition of humor. This discussion is followed by an insightful look at the background of humor research, focusing on the two prevalent theoretical viewpoints of incongruity and cognitive-appraisal. Moving to the more specific aspects of workplace humor, the review next focuses on the potential benefits of humor in the workplace as cited in the literature; included are discussions of the effect of humor on productivity, creativity, and numerous other workplace factors ranging from stress to group cohesiveness. From there, the appropriateness of humor in the workplace is addressed, followed by an enumeration of the factors that were identified in the literature as influencing an individual's acceptance of such humor. The literature review then focuses on the importance of management involvement in workplace humor, and concludes with a look at several organizations that have successfully implemented humor in the workplace.

### ***2.2 Definition of Humor***

Humor is a complex construct that, while widely experienced, lacks a common operational definition. The dilemma in constructing such a generic definition is that it is

difficult, if not impossible, to come up with a single interpretation that adequately addresses all of the possible forms that humor may take. According to Mary Ann Rishel, President and 1994 Conference Chair of the International Society For Humor Studies, this issue is one of the most widely discussed topics at the society's annual international conference on humor. The drawback in trying to apply a standard operational definition of humor is that it often characterizes humor too narrowly or so broadly that the definition encompasses other concepts that are very distinct from humor.

*Webster's New World Dictionary (Third College Edition)* provides the following definitions of humor:

- 1) A person's disposition or temperament.
- 2) A mood; state of mind.
- 3) Whim, fancy, caprice.
- 4) The quality that makes something seem funny, amusing, or ludicrous; comicality.
- 5) The ability to perceive, appreciate, or express what is funny, amusing, or ludicrous.
- 6) The expression of what is funny, amusing, or ludicrous in speech, writing, or action.

One of the main challenges to humor researchers is the formulation of an adequate operational definition. Chapman and Foote (1976:3) note that a major problem in defining humor is determining whether it is to be viewed as a stimulus, a response, or a disposition. For example, in *Webster's* definition, humor has been characterized as 'the quality that makes something seem funny, amusing, or ludicrous' (a *stimulus*); and, as 'a mood; state of mind' (a *response*); and, as 'The ability to perceive, appreciate, or express what is funny, amusing, or ludicrous' (a *disposition*). Given the diversity of meanings that can be

applied to humor, the difficulty in developing a standard operational definition becomes readily apparent.

Consequently, Chapman and Foote (1976:3) note that there has been a reluctance among humor theorists to operationally define humor. Instead, theorists have proposed and emphasized certain key ingredients as prerequisites to the occurrence of humor. These prerequisites make up the defining characteristics of several different theories of humor, which are the topic of discussion in the next section.

Nonetheless, despite the reluctance and difficulty in defining humor, some researchers have attempted to do so. As stated above, the pitfalls of trying to apply such a standardized definition of humor are that it is often too narrowly or too broadly defined.

As an example, Duncan (1982:136) suggests that "it is generally agreed that humor can be defined as a unique type of communication that is characterized by incongruent relationships or meanings that are presented in such a way so as to cause laughter". In this example, humor is likely defined too narrowly, as it only represents the viewpoint of incongruity theorists who argue that some form of incongruity must exist for humor to be realized. While the definition may be representative of some forms of humor, it does not represent those forms that are espoused by proponents of other widely accepted theories of humor. Incongruity and other theories of humor are presented in the next section.

Saper (1987:364) attempts to characterize humor in much broader terms by describing it as a "broad-gauged, complex, and multi-faceted phenomenon". By itself, this characterization is clearly too broad to represent an adequate definition of humor; the difficulty in crafting such an all-inclusive definition is that it often becomes so generic that it fails to exclude items that meet the defining criteria, but that are not humor. For example, most human emotions, even sadness, may be described as a broad-gauged, complex, and multi-faceted phenomenon; certainly, while humor and sadness meet this defining criteria, they are almost opposite in meaning.



Saper (1987:364) does, however, go on to provide a more specific definition of humor: "...humor is defined comprehensively as an affective, cognitive, or esthetic aspect of a person, stimulus, or event that evokes such indications of amusement, joy or mirth as the laughing, smiling, or giggling response". While this definition appears to represent many potential instances of humor, it has not been widely accepted as a standard definition.

In light of the difficulty in finding an operational definition of humor that has been widely accepted, it is important to highlight some key characteristics that appear to belong to all forms of humor. Perhaps the most compelling characteristic is that humor is both situation-specific and individual-specific (Duncan and Feisal, 1989:29; Mendleson et al, 1986:5). That is to say, what may be humorous in one situation, may not be humorous in a different situation (situation-specific). For example, the telling of a good-natured joke at a party might be considered humorous by the individuals involved in the experience, whereas the same joke told to the same individuals while at a funeral ceremony would probably not be considered humorous at all. By the same token, what is viewed as humorous by one individual, may not be viewed as humorous by a different individual (individual-specific). Ethnic jokes provide a good example of individual-specific humor, since any particular ethnic joke may be deemed as humorous by some, and offensive by others.

Another key defining characteristic of humor is presented by McGhee (1977:29) who characterizes it as a "cognitive-affective experience". He points out that humor consists of a characteristic set of cognitions, accompanied by characteristic forms of arousal fluctuation. While simply referring to humor as a cognitive-affective experience doesn't distinguish it from the myriad of other entities that can be classified as cognitive-affective experiences, it does highlight the fact that for humor to be realized there must be some form of cognitive processing of information and a resulting state of arousal. An

example of this cognitive-affective activity might be the comprehension of the humorous aspect of an event (cognitive processing) accompanied by the affective response of laughter.

For the purposes of this research effort, we have not attempted to specifically advocate any particular definition of humor. Rather, noting that humor is both situation-specific and individual-specific, our data collection effort left the interpretation of what constitutes humor in the workplace up to the individual respondent. This was necessary because we were interested in characterizing the expression of humor in all of its possible forms and it would have been impossible to predetermine a definition that would adequately account for all of the possible expressions of humor.

Now that the difficulties associated with defining humor have been presented, we will shift our focus to the theories of humor presented in the literature. It is important to keep in mind that, in the absence of a unified operational definition, many of the defining characteristics of the varying forms of humor are presented in the following theories.

### ***2.3 Background of Humor Research***

While humor has been studied for over 2000 years by scholars in fields ranging from philosophy to medicine, the majority of the research has been speculative and fragmented, and has failed to establish a common theoretical foundation (Duncan et al, 1990:258). Instead, a myriad of diverse theoretical explanations of humor have emerged, each with their own merit, but each lacking universal applicability. Noting the lack of an all-embracing theory of humor, Chapman and Foote (1976:4) postulate that vast differences in individual responsiveness to humor may, in fact, prevent the widespread acceptance of any *one* general theory of humor. Another contributing factor to the lack of a unifying theory of humor may be the difficulty in developing a common operational definition as noted in the previous section.

While many theories have been established that represent a wide range of perspectives on humor, Duncan et al (1990:257) note that most theoretical notions are either based upon the viewpoints of incongruity or "cognitive-appraisal". Incongruity-based theories stress the importance of incongruity in explaining *what* it is about the structure of a joke or situation that makes it funny, while theories based upon cognitive-appraisal attempt to explain *why* an individual may appreciate or enjoy the humor. While these two viewpoints do not represent all of the theoretical approaches to humor, they do account for those that are most widely distributed and discussed; as such, they are now discussed in greater detail.

**2.3.1 Incongruity.** Incongruity appears to be the most widely discussed underlying structural factor in humorous jokes or situations. The central postulate of incongruity theories of humor is that something must be unexpected, ambiguous, illogical, or incompatible to be deemed as funny (Barsoux, 1993:124; Duncan et al, 1990:258; Morreall, 1987:6; Pollio, 1983:226; Feinberg, 1978:2). In other words, incongruity theorists see incongruity as an essential structural characteristic of humorous jokes or situations. The following examples are provided to illustrate the presence of incongruity in humor:

Comic strip writer Gary Larson utilizes incongruity in many of his *Far Side* comics to create a humorous effect. As an example, he often injects incongruity into the comic strip by presenting animals that exhibit human characteristics such as cognitive and social skills. The incompatibility between how we normally perceive animals and how Larson portrays them often results in humor as evidenced by the laughter of those who read the comic strip. Incongruity theorists would contend that it is this incompatibility that accounts for the presence of humor.

Incongruity is also an important aspect of the structure of humorous jokes. Duncan et al (1990:258) explain how many jokes are structured to lead an audience along

a certain path of comprehension until it is abruptly switched to another path by revealing the joke's punchline. The sudden switch creates a violation of expectancy, resulting in an incongruity that often causes laughter.

However, while incongruity appears to be a dominant characteristic of humor, it can be shown that it is neither necessary nor sufficient for the existence of humor. It is readily apparent that something may be perceived as humorous in the absence of an incongruous circumstance; for example, the facial expressions of a clown, absent of any incongruity, may be seen by many as humorous. Likewise, it is also apparent that the mere presence of an incongruity may not be sufficient to result in humor, in fact, it may actually lead to fear, shock or disgust (Feinberg, 1978:3). One can imagine that the incongruity of oxygen masks falling from the overhead compartment of an airline would give rise to fear and shock, rather than humor. Thus, while incongruity theories of humor provide significant insight into some forms of humor, they have faults that prevent them from becoming comprehensive, universal theories of humor.

**2.3.2 Cognitive-Appraisal.** Whereas incongruity theories seek to explain *what* it is about the structure of an event that makes it funny, cognitive-appraisal theories attempt to explain *why* an individual may appreciate or enjoy the humor. It is suggested from this perspective that the discovery of an incongruity produces an increase in cognitive activity, which is accompanied by an increase in arousal and pleasure (Duncan et al, 1990:259). Cognitive-appraisal theory assumes that an individual's appraisal of a situation depends upon the unique experiences of that individual, and that those past experiences shape the individual's emotional response to the situation. Duncan et al (1990:259) suggest that the process of cognitive appraisal may be a central component in humor appreciation.

Two theories of humor that are based upon the viewpoint of cognitive-appraisal are superiority, and disparagement theories. Duncan et al (1990:259) suggest that these theories are hard to differentiate amongst because they are both based upon the premise

"that people laugh when they feel superior to others". Superiority theories of humor are primarily concerned with the appropriateness of initiating humor based upon one's status or social distance from the persons who are the witness or the focus of such humor (Duncan, 1985). Disparagement theories of humor are based upon the notion that "mirth is a spontaneous reaction of pleasure resulting from a favorable comparison of self to others" (Duncan et al, 1990:260).

For the purposes of this research, we do not adopt any particular theory of humor; Rather, we note the different theoretical approaches to the study of humor to highlight the fact that humor is a multi-faceted construct that can be approached from more than one perspective of study.

## ***2.4 Humor in the Workplace***

In recent years, the study of humor in the workplace has been gaining increased research attention (Smeltzer and Leap, 1988:295). To date, most of the research in workplace humor has been primarily theoretical in nature; in the few instances where empirical data have been collected, it has been primarily qualitative (Duncan and Feisal, 1989:22). Prior research has focused primarily on the psychological aspects of humor, with little direct relevance to management theory (Duncan, 1982:137). In fact, the study of humor in management has never really gotten started (Duncan et al, 1990:255).

Why should researchers be interested in humor in the workplace? Furthermore, why should managers be interested? The most compelling reasons lie in the ubiquity of humor in social settings and the potential benefits that it holds in store. Indeed, humor is present nearly everywhere that people congregate, and as such, its existence and significance in the workplace cannot be ignored; since joking takes place in all organizations, managers have little ability to limit or prevent this kind of behavior (Duncan and Feisal, 1989:19).

There has been a great deal of speculation as to the benefits that can be derived from humor in the workplace, including the potential influence it can have on productivity and creativity (Jaffe, 1990:58; Towler 1990:33; Duncan and Feisal, 1989:29; Buhler, 1991:23; Goodman, 1991:123; Matthes, 1993:3; Ross, 1988:24). From a manager's point of view, enhancements to these two workforce characteristics could possibly be the most salient benefits to be derived from the existence and management of humor in the workplace.

**2.4.1 *The Effect of Humor On Productivity.*** To date, no direct correlation has been established between the levels of workplace humor and an organization's productivity. However, the literature contains a great deal of speculation that such correlation exists.

Jaffe (1990:58) typifies the sentiments about workplace humor by claiming that it can increase employee loyalty, productivity, and job enthusiasm which may in turn help a company deal with increasing competition and increased demands for productivity. Perhaps this speculation is grounded in the belief that happy workers are more productive because fun reduces tension and allows them to concentrate on their work. Additional productivity gains may result from the fact that interacting with coworkers is thought to reduce the need to get support by calling home, goofing off, or otherwise staying away from work (Towler, 1990:33).

A study by Duncan and Feisal (1989:29) produced no proof that joking can improve performance (including productivity). However, they speculated that since joking improves group cohesiveness it is likely that it also indirectly influences group performance. They have also claimed that if high performance norms are present in an organization, the team building aspect of joking may contribute to the improvement of individual group and organizational performance.

While the claims and hypotheses provide logical explanations for both direct and indirect links between humor and productivity, the literature provides no empirical evidence supporting them. The lack of empirical data serves to highlight the fact that very little research has been done to establish a link between humor and productivity. As a precursor to such research, we deemed it appropriate to characterize workers' attitudes and perceptions towards humor in the workplace and its potential effects on productivity. Naturally, if a correlation between humor and productivity exists, then humor presents a highly appealing tool for modern managers grasping for ways to bolster organizational productivity.

**2.4.2 The Effect of Humor on Creativity.** As with productivity, no definitive ties have been established between levels of humor and creativity in the workplace. However, there are several assertions that such a correlation may exist (Barsoux, 1993: 48; Bolman and Deal, 1992:41; Thomas, 1988:27).

Buhler (1991:23) states that an established correlation *does* exist between an individual's sense of humor and his ability to be creative; unfortunately, she does not cite the empirical research supporting this claim. She also states that humor frequently provides the catalyst to more creative thinking and to a more innovative approach to the task at hand. Barsoux (1993:48) reasons that humor paves the way for innovation by helping people to relax, fostering team spirit, and promoting a spirit of openness and reciprocity.

Some studies link the possession of a sense of humor with an individual's ability to solve problems and their ability to handle interpersonal relations (Towler, 1990:32). Matthes (1993:3) further notes that people who enjoy their work are more productive and creative, in addition to having greater job satisfaction.

It is certainly plausible to hypothesize about a correlation between humor and creativity. To that end, Ross (1988: 24) proposes that humor stimulates creativity by

acting as a catalyst in diminishing both formality and structure in an organization. He suggests that formality and structure inhibit open communication and stifle creativity because people are guarded and don't want to appear silly or ignorant. By diminishing an organization's formality and structure, one could hypothesize that organizational and individual creativity would flourish.

Kahn (1989:50) discusses humor's affect on creativity in the context of the cognitive function of reframing; he states that humor enables people to "...reframe and explore their familiar, taken-for-granted worlds". By reframing, Kahn means that humor enables us to psychologically take a step back and look at matters from a different perspective. Kahn suggests that this ability to adopt new perspectives is closely related to the ability to think more creatively.

While all of these claims and hypotheses provide logical explanations for both direct and indirect links between humor and creativity, we have not found any of them to be empirically derived. Just as in the case of productivity, there has been a lack of research aimed at establishing such a link between humor and creativity. Indeed, it is a difficult, if not impossible, correlation to establish. Some difficult issues facing researchers are determining and agreeing upon what constitutes humor and what constitutes creativity. For now, a logical first step is to try and gauge workers' attitudes and perceptions about humor and its potential effects on creativity.

**2.4.3 Other Potential Benefits of Workplace Humor.** Aside from the potential benefits of increased productivity and creativity, humor in the workplace has been credited with the ability to affect numerous other workplace factors. The following sections provide a brief synopsis of the additional benefits that were cited in the literature.

**2.4.3.1 Improved Group Cohesiveness.** Humor can increase the cohesiveness of workgroups by developing a sense of unification (Duncan, 1982:138-139). Duncan suggests that intragroup cohesiveness may be at its highest when a



perceived external threat is most severe; under such circumstances, the utilization of humor to highlight an organizational threat could promote the unification of the organization to combat the threat. Likewise, humor has also been credited with shaping organizational identity, which can lend to improved group cohesiveness by creating a sense of belonging (Duncan et al, 1990:255).

**2.4.3.2 Stress Reduction.** Metcalf and Felible (1992:16) report that a survey by Northwestern National Life Insurance indicated thirty four percent of U.S. workers had considered quitting their jobs in 1990 due to excessive stress, with fourteen percent actually quitting because of it. According to the same survey, forty-six percent of the workers described their jobs as highly stressful, twice as many as in 1985. Humor can be used to ventilate feelings of anxiety and stress (Barsoux, 1993:87). A common response to humor is laughter, which works much like a pressure relief valve allowing anxious and nervous energy to escape (Sleeter, 1981:26). Feigelson (1989:8) likens the purging effects of laughter to an internal massage that reduces tension and stress. By reducing and removing tension and stress, humor can increase job satisfaction, reduce burnout, and enable employees to concentrate on accomplishing the tasks at hand.

**2.4.3.3 Relief From Boredom.** Humor is said to alleviate boredom in the workplace (Towler, 1990:33; Smeltzer and Leap, 1988:296). This may be an especially salient benefit for organizations in which the work is mundane and repetitive, as is the case in many manufacturing organizations. In such organizations, feelings of boredom may manifest themselves in less organizational commitment, increased absenteeism, and greater employee turnover.

**2.4.3.4 Reduced Absenteeism and Turnover.** As reported by Feigelson (1989:6), the findings of a survey conducted by psychologist David J. Abramis, Ph.D., indicated that employees who have fun at work are less likely to be late or absent. The survey also found that job turnover is lower for those working in the presence of fun. The

implication is that making the workplace fun increases one's long term job satisfaction and enthusiasm towards daily attendance.

**2.4.3.5 Increased Motivation.** The survey by Abramis also indicated that workers who had fun in the workplace experienced higher levels of motivation. Ross (1989:12) also notes the power of humor to motivate the workforce, and suggests that making work fun and enjoyable encourages employees to perform at their peak. This benefit, which may be closely coupled with productivity, is particularly important in today's highly competitive business environment.

**2.4.3.6 Increased Morale.** Likely resulting from the combined effects of increased group cohesiveness, decreased stress, and increased motivation, morale is also reported to increase in the presence of humor (Barsoux, 1993:88; Ross, 1989:35; Kushner, 1988:33). As was alluded to earlier in Chapter I, one of the debilitating effects of the current downsizing trend is decreased morale of the remaining workforce; thus, the use of humor for the potential of increasing morale is especially appealing.

**2.4.3.7 Openness and Communications.** Ross (1989:73) cites studies that indicate that managers spend anywhere from 70% to 94% of their day in communication related activities, depending upon their level. He goes on to suggest that communication skills are best strengthened through humor, since the effective use of humor has the ability to build rapport, grab and hold attention, relax the audience, make the point, bridge, and persuade.

Just as business speakers have uncovered the positive power of humor, managers are discovering it to be a cost effective means of influencing people. Humor can facilitate communications by putting bad news in perspective, connecting you to your audience, and by making facts and figures easier to understand. Likewise, a humorous approach to a sensitive subject indicates that perhaps "you are not completely rigid in how you see things and therefore might be worth listening to" (Iapoce, 1988:29).

Duncan (1982:139) agrees that the appropriate use of humor in communication facilitates the transfer of information. In fact, it is believed that jokes can safely transfer information whose delivery might otherwise be risky to the initiator (Duncan and Feisal, 1989:22). Humor also has the potential to open communication lines between all levels of employees, removing intimidation, and developing an environment of openness (Ross, 1988:25). Indeed, managers who can poke fun at themselves are viewed as being more approachable; a well-placed self disparaging joke can sometimes help the manager by letting the group know that he/she is a real person (Duncan and Feisal, 1989:28). By removing intimidation, management is more likely to be told about a problem before it becomes a crisis (Nolan, 1986:29).

**2.4.4 Potentially Destructive Effects of Humor.** Duncan and Feisal (1989:19) are quick to point out that while joking on the job provides many potential benefits, it has the potential to result in several dangerous outcomes as well. Specifically, they point to the fact that humor, if not used carefully, can be offensive and insensitive to some members of the workgroup. For example, some members of the workgroup would likely be offended by sexual or ethnic jokes. It is important to note that this kind of destructive humor can negatively affect the factors of workgroup cohesiveness, workplace stress, absenteeism and turnover, motivation, morale, and openness and communications. Duncan and Feisal stress that managers and group members alike need to be aware and sensitive to the cultural, historical, and demographic characteristics of their workgroups.

**2.4.5 The Appropriateness of Humor in the Workplace.** If humor harbors the potential to bolster productivity and creativity, as well as a whole host of other potential benefits, we must consider whether or not the workplace is an appropriate place to express it. The potential benefits to be gained by allowing, or even promoting, the expression of humor in the workplace certainly make it seemingly appropriate. However, to many, humor on the job " ..flies in the face of a lot of old line thinking, that if you 're

serious about your job, you're in here 60 hours a week, and there's no place for laughter and silliness" (Braham, 1988:51). Indeed, many people view the workplace as a place for seriousness, not silliness.

However, the dichotomy that we perceive between the spheres of work and play does not really exist according to Duncan and Feisal (1989:29). In fact, they view humor in the workplace as an essential element for getting the job done by building group cohesion and morale. People need to feel that they are accepted members of their group and joking can be effective to this end. Furthermore, management experts are now expressing the belief that all work and no play makes the employees unhappy and unproductive (Jaffe, 1990:58). McKenna (1992:22), quoting a humor consultant, points out that a sense of humor is neither unprofessional nor unintelligent; on the contrary, it is in fact the hallmark of our most creative minds.

However, despite these strong arguments for the appropriateness of humor in the workplace, there are many factors that can affect an individual's attitudes towards workplace humor. For example, according to Smeltzer and Leap (1988:295), inexperienced employees consider all joking behavior at work to be less appropriate than experienced employees, and whites and females considered racist and sexist jokes more inappropriate than blacks and males. With these examples in mind, it is important to look at the different factors that can affect an individual's acceptance of workplace humor.

**2.4.6 Factors Affecting Individual Acceptance of Humor.** There are numerous factors that can affect an individual's appreciation and acceptance of humor. Indeed, there is often a fine line between what an individual deems as acceptable and unacceptable uses of humor. Humor appreciation is a phenomenon that depends upon individual perception (Sleeter, 1981:27), and individual perceptions can be a function of a myriad of variables. Research done by Duncan and Feisal (1989:21) indicates that managers and group members need to be sensitive to the cultural, historical, and

demographic characteristics of their work groups when expressing humor in the workplace. If not carefully done, the expression of humor can be seen as offensive and can produce the opposite outcome of what was desired.

As reported by Malone (1980:359), Stearns identified 5 basic variables that can influence a person's determination of what is funny. They are:

- 1) age
- 2) gender
- 3) education
- 4) language
- 5) culture

Numerous researchers concur with Stearns that gender is a determining factor in humor appreciation and acceptance. Duncan and Feisal (1982:138) note the collective agreement of Hokanson, Willers, and Korpsak that males and females react differently to different types of humor. Duncan and Feisal (1989:21) specifically note that males and females react in different ways to aggressive humor. Decker (1986:43) highlights this difference by citing a study in which male students reacted more favorably to aggressive humor than did females. The study found that subjects of both sexes appreciated humor which put down the opposite sex. These findings highlight the importance that gender plays in shaping one's attitudes and perceptions about the acceptability of differing expressions of humor.

Similar concurrence is found with regards to the effects of one's cultural background on their acceptance of different forms of humor. Cultural backgrounds are critical to the interpretation of a joke (Duncan and Feisal, 1989:20). Duncan and Feisal stress that managers need to be particularly aware of the ethnic, racial, and sexual composition of a work group before attempting to use humor effectively. They point out

that while well intended ethnic humor can have a positive effect, it can also be insensitive and offensive when used in the absence of certain preconditions such as trust.

### ***2.5 Importance of Management Involvement in Workplace Humor.***

As seen by humor consultant Bob Ross (1988:24), humor has emerged as a management tool in stark contrast to the industrial tools of control and intimidation. He goes on to insist that management's responsibility is to create a work environment that fosters success, and that is conducive to creative thinking, fun, and reasoning in non-standardized ways. However, Despite humor's vast potential to help management fulfill these responsibilities, remarkably few researchers have made an attempt to relate humor to the functions of management and leadership (Malone, 1980:357).

If management wishes to realize the potential benefits that humor brings to the workplace, it is apparent that they must become intimately involved in planning and supporting it. Jaffe (1990:58) insists that maintaining the distinction between fun and goofing off in the workplace requires that fun be planned and run by companies' top management. Noting that the infusion of humor into the workplace often requires a complete change in corporate culture, Jaffe again stresses the importance of top management support. Certainly, for the positive benefits of workplace humor to be effectively realized, there must be a driving force guiding the way; and while management may not be able to effectively realize these benefits by "imposing" fun in the workplace (Roberts, 1993:124), the importance of their awareness and involvement in humor cannot be overstated.

### ***2.6 Examples of Humor in Action in the Workplace***

Jaffe (1990:58) indicates that companies that currently employ a management by fun strategy are often in highly competitive industries where workers are under constant

pressure to perform. As a testimony to the seriousness with which these organizations look at humor, we have provided the following examples of how humor is being applied in one form or another.

**2.6.1 *Physio-Control, Incorporated.*** An Eli Lilly Corporation subsidiary, Physio-Control manufactures heart monitors and defibrillators in Redmond, Washington. As reported by Jaffe (1990:58), amidst production scheduling problems that threatened performance bonuses and had employee tensions running high, the production manager decided to try a little levity in the workplace to reduce employee tension. With top management approval, the production manager dressed up like a clown and pedaled a children's tricycle through the 300,000 square foot manufacturing facility towing a little red wagon that carried a siren and a banner announcing that a production goal had been met. For three months, whenever a certain production goal was met, a different manager would don a clown suit (or some other non-traditional clothing) and make his way through the facility, attracting the attention of nearly every employee, and halting production for up to 10 minutes in each work area. Despite the interruptions, the production manager reported that all production goals were easily exceeded, as was the goal of reducing employee tension.

**2.6.2 *Odetics, Incorporated.*** Jaffe (1990:59) also reports on the management by fun strategy employed by Odetics, a manufacturer of advanced intelligence machine systems in Anaheim, California. As reported by Jaffe, the company invested resources to try and institute a fun work environment to help prevent high employee turnover by making people want to stay. Some of the management by fun techniques employed by the management of Odetics include casual dress days on Fridays, as well as "theme" days in which employees are encouraged to dress up in accordance with a fun theme. They have also converted the cafeteria into a sock hop and have included a phone booth for stuffing competitions to see how many people could be stuffed into it. It is also reported that an

informal group labeling themselves the "fun committee" has emerged which has organized many events including employee Olympics during the lunch hours, showcasing goofy events that coincide with the actual Olympic Games. The group has even organized surprise ice-cream parties for the firm's 500 employees.

**2.6.3 Southwest Airlines.** In the highly competitive airline industry, Southwest Airlines is gaining a competitive edge by implementing humor in flight. Jaffe (1990:60) reports that Herb Keller, Southwest Airlines' chairman and chief executive officer, believes that the humorous environment engendered by its pilots and flight attendants has provided a climate for better customer service. Southwest believes that workers who are having fun will treat customers well. As an example of Southwest's innovative use of humor, a flight attendant for Southwest might make the pre-flight safety announcement in a song, impersonating Elvis Presley, or in the soft-spoken persona of children's TV-show host Mr. Rogers. Providing another example of Southwest's use of humor, Jaffe tells the story of a winter flight in which flight attendants dressed up as elves and reindeer and danced in the aisles as the captain gently rocked the plane back and forth to the music of Christmas carols that he was singing over the address system. Not only does the unique use of humor by Southwest give it a competitive edge through excellent customer service, it also increases the morale and loyalty of its employees. That loyalty was evidenced when oil prices jumped in 1990; employees bought \$135,000 worth of fuel for the airline through payroll deductions (Metcalf and Felible, 1992:18).

**2.6.4 Ben & Jerry's Homemade, Incorporated.** Ben & Jerry's Homemade Ice Cream, which started as a two man scooping operation in an old gasoline station in upstate Vermont and grew to a multi-million dollar enterprise in less than ten years, is often noted for its innovative application of humor in the workplace. To encourage its employees, Ben & Jerry's started a committee called the "Joy Gang" to distribute grants to departments that come up with creative ways to bring humor and happiness into the



workplace; the grants have been used with just as much creativity as the ideas that earned them, including the hiring of a masseuse for tired workers (Matthes, 1993:3).

**2.6.5 Sun Microsystems.** At Sun Microsystems, management encourages the use of humor to expand the creativity of its engineers by encouraging April Fools day pranks. Each year, engineers plan and execute elaborate jokes on company executives. In past years, the engineers have converted the CEO's office into a miniature golf course complete with sand traps and water hazards. They have also floated the cofounder's Ferrari out into the middle of a fish pond. The festivities are videotaped and shown to employees at other sites, and T-shirts are sold to commemorate and fund the event (Matthes, 1993:3).

## **2.6 Summary**

Some of the issues facing humor researchers today include the lack of a singularly sufficient definition or theory of humor. While the study of humor dates back over 2000 years, research on the effects of humor in the workplace is still in its infancy. However, numerous workplace benefits of humor have been cited and include increased productivity, creativity, group cohesiveness, morale, motivation, reduced stress, relief from boredom, lower absenteeism and turnover, openness, and better communications. Given the potential these benefits provide, the appropriateness of humor in the workplace is justified, and the importance of management awareness and involvement in humor is tantamount. Nonetheless, management must be sure to be sensitive to the demographic makeup of the organization so as not to offend anyone with the incorrect use of humor. The drawback is that very few of these purported benefits have been justified by empirical research or controlled studies. Nonetheless, some companies have begun to implement humor in the workplace.

### **III. Methodology**

#### ***3.1 Overview***

This chapter identifies the methodology that was employed to accomplish the research objectives and answer the investigative questions documented in Chapter I. The chapter is topically divided to address the key methodological issues of research design, data collection, survey development (including variable identification), reliability and validity, data analysis and interpretation, and research limitations.

#### ***3.2 Research Design***

The primary objective of this research was to assess the extent to which humor is accepted and employed in the work environment. In evaluating the level of acceptance, the researchers also sought to determine employees' perceptions of the impact of humor on productivity and creativity. A secondary objective was to determine the extent to which workers perceive that management could deliberately employing humor as a catalyst for productivity and creativity. Since the study of humor in the workplace is still in its infancy, this research was primarily exploratory in nature, and was designed around a comprehensive survey that was developed to ultimately answer the research questions. The survey was developed with significant insight gained from the extensive literature review. As the survey represents a significant product of this research effort, it has been provided at Appendix A, and is now discussed in greater detail.

#### ***3.3 Data Collection***

The primary method of data collection consisted of a mail survey (Appendix A) that was developed around the investigative questions posed in Chapter I. In order to fulfill the research objectives, several survey questions were generated to answer each of the investigative questions. Since the research was primarily exploratory, the target population was very broadly defined, embodying workplace organizations in general. To

represent this population, a sample was selected to include large and small organizations from each of three industry types: manufacturing, research and development, and service. This target population was appropriate for gathering exploratory information about humor in the workplace because it allowed for the capture and exploration of the moderating effects of several organizational and individual level variables; these variables are identified and discussed in greater detail later in this chapter. Unfortunately, the researchers were unable to enlist the support of a "small manufacturing" or a "large research and development" organization; furthermore, two of the three large manufacturing organizations that had agreed to participate failed to distribute any of the 20 surveys that were sent to each of them. The organizations that did participate in our survey are listed in Table 1.

**Table 1**  
**Participating Organizations**

Company Name	Industry Type	# Surveys sent	Surveys returned
Panasonic	Large Manufacturing	20	7
Metropolitan Life	Large Service	20	6
Logical Operations	Large Service	20	12
Children's Medical Hospital	Large Service	20	5
Health Springs Medical Grp.	Small Service	20	8
Morris Sons Funeral Home	Small Service	5	3
Beta Industries	Small R&D	10	7

Within each organization, the survey was administered to between five and twenty respondents, depending upon the size of the organization. These organizations were specifically selected to include those of different size from each of manufacturing, research and development, and service industries. A mail survey, aimed at characterizing individual attitudes towards workplace humor, was the most appropriate means for obtaining the amount and type of data necessary to answer the research objectives; it provided the ability to reach a relatively large number of respondents representing the variety of moderating variables of interest in a timely manner.

**3.3.1 Survey Development.** The survey (*Appendix A*) was designed with a primarily close-ended, Likert scaled response structure; however, some open-ended questions were included to allow for flexibility in the responses. Additionally, space was provided after each Likert scaled question for the inclusion of any comments that the respondents desired to offer. Since humor is both situation and individual specific, a rigid operational definition of humor was not applied. Instead, a generic description of humor was provided at the outset of the survey, along with a recommendation that the respondents thoughtfully consider that which might constitute humor in their organizations. This approach left the specific interpretation of the form of the humor up to the respondent. The majority of the survey questions attempted to probe the respondents' attitudes towards workplace humor, and their perceptions of its impact on productivity and creativity. Further questions were designed to elicit information regarding the level and types of humor currently existing in the workplace, while others sought to determine the workers' perceptions as to the ability of management to successfully enhance productivity and creativity through the promotion of workplace humor. Additionally, several questions targeting demographic information served in gathering data pertinent to the moderating variables of interest. In developing the survey, both an independent and two dependent variables were established, the study of which

were necessary to achieve our research objective. These variables, as well as the moderating variables, are now discussed in detail.

**3.3.2 Independent and Dependent Variable Identification.** For this research, the primary variable of interest was the level of workplace humor. Humor served as the independent variable for which the researchers tried to assess possible influences on the dependent variables of productivity and creativity. These dependent variables were selected because they were viewed as being potentially significant consequences of workplace humor. However, the survey allowed respondents to indicate additional variables that they felt were impacted by humor. The relationship between the independent and dependent variables was explored by measuring workers' perceptions of the impact of humor on productivity and creativity (as well as many other secondary factors). For these purposes, enhanced productivity was broadly defined as "increased job performance on the part of the worker", thus avoiding the difficulty of trying to generically define productivity in quantifiable terms. Creativity was defined in terms of the extent to which it provided for innovative thinking in the workplace.

**3.3.3 Moderating Variables.** The survey was primarily developed to answer the research objectives by characterizing individual attitudes and perceptions towards the usage of humor in organizational work settings. In doing so, the researchers were concerned with the moderating effects of variables at both the organizational and individual levels of analysis.

Organizational variables that were viewed as having potential moderating effects on individual attitudes towards the usage of humor in the workplace included both the size of the organization and the type of industry in which it operates. It was initially thought that the type of industry would, in part, determine workplace attitudes towards humor. For example, the management of a high powered accounting firm with frequent client interaction may feel that their corporate professional image would be severely

compromised by displays of lightheartedness among its employees. On the other hand, a large manufacturing organization may see humor as an indispensable way to combat monotony on the assembly line, while a research and development organization may view humor as either an essential catalyst to creativity or as a severe impediment to the work at hand. It was the intent of the study to look for any significant relationships between the type of industry in which the organization functioned and the relative acceptability of workplace humor.

Another factor that was examined for its potential impact on the acceptability of humor was the size of the organization. A large organization might have published codes of conduct which explicitly discourage expressions of workplace humor, while a small organization might have a more tightly knit work community in which the casual, frequent expression of humor was the norm. Conversely, large organizations have the financial resources to implement "humor workshops" and develop dedicated "humor rooms", while most small organizations cannot actively pursue humor in these ways. This study sought to determine if an organization's size in any way impacted its acceptability of humor. As indicated above, the sample was specifically selected to include representation from large and small organizations in production, research and development, and service industries. For these purposes, a small organization was defined as having less than 100 individuals, whereas a large organization was defined as having greater than 100 individuals.

Individual level variables that were viewed as having potential moderating effects on attitudes included gender, age, education level, ethnic background, length of employment with the organization, current level within the organization, length of time in current position, and average number of people interacted with daily..

The researchers hypothesized that gender may moderate an individual's overall acceptability of humor in the workplace since the literature pointed out that men and women react to humor in different ways. Furthermore, it was hypothesized that women

might find certain types of workplace humor offensive or threatening, and might therefore be less accepting of workplace humor.

In a similar way, the researchers also hypothesized that employee age might influence attitudes towards workplace humor. Younger employees may feel more energetic and be more apt to participate in workplace humor, while older employees might frown upon expressions of humor and be more likely to feel that humor does not belong in a place of business.

Another potential moderating effect of an individual's attitudes towards humor in the workplace may be his education level. An individual with a college degree may feel more or less liberty to express humor on the job than would the individual with only a high school degree. Similarly, an individual's education level may temper his perceptions about the different benefits or detriments to be realized from the expression of humor in the workplace.

The literature pointed out that different cultures and ethnicity respond differently to various types of humor. Therefore, employee race may moderate the acceptability of humor in the workplace.

Length of employment within the organization was also seen as having a potential effect on workplace humor. A new employee may be more likely to feel uncomfortable in a relatively new work environment and thus less comfortable expressing humor. On the other hand, an employee with more time in the organization is probably more comfortable in the environment and may express their sense of humor accordingly.

Finally, employee level in the organization may affect the extent to which the employee accepts or participates in humor. In a manner similar to the above situation, an employee at the bottom of the organizational chain might be less secure in his position and therefore not express humor freely. On the other hand, a top level manager could be more burdened with concerns about maintaining the health of the organization and under more

stress than lower leveled employees; this would undoubtedly make him less prone to levity in the workplace. The literature suggests, however, that top level managers have a "monopoly" on humor and are the only ones who can express humor freely in the organization. This research keyed on the determination of how employee level affected acceptance and employment of humor in the sample.

In addition to employee level, the length of time that an individual has served in his current position may affect his attitudes towards workplace humor. An individual that is relatively new to his current position may feel less inclined to appreciate or participate in humorous behavior. Likewise, the number of people that the individual interacts with on a daily basis may also play a role in shaping their attitudes towards workplace humor.

The moderating variables were accounted for by implementing demographical questions posed to the respondent of the mail survey. Potential effects were examined in the data analysis by grouping the survey responses according to the classification of a given moderating variable. These grouped responses were then compared to determine if any statistically significant differences existed between groups. Further discussion of the analysis technique is provided in section 3.5.

### ***3.4 Reliability and Validity***

Survey reliability can be addressed by analyzing it from the perspectives of stability, equivalence, and internal consistency (Emory and Cooper, 1991:185-187). Since the research effort was constrained by time and resources, only one version of the survey was administered at one point in time, with no repeated measurements of the respondents. As a result, the researchers were unable to analyze reliability through the perspectives of stability or equivalence. However, an attempt has been made to ensure reliability through internal consistency by incorporating multiple questions for each point of interest. We believe that this measure of internal consistency lends credence to the reliability of the survey itself.



In addition to reliability, the survey was developed to possess both content and criterion-related validity. Through review, pretesting, and refinement of the survey, an attempt was made to establish criterion related validity by ensuring that the elements that were chosen to measure the acceptance and employment of humor were relevant, free from bias, reliable, and available for measurement. Once criterion related validity was established, the researchers pursued content validity by including sufficient questions in the survey to accurately measure the elements (criterion).

### ***3.5 Data Analysis and Interpretation***

The primary goal of the data analysis was to fulfill the research objective by characterizing the survey data corresponding to each of the investigative questions posed in Chapter I. This was accomplished primarily through the use of descriptive statistics; specifically, the data was characterized by evaluating the sample means and frequency of responses grouped for each of the moderating variables. Another tangible goal was to determine if significant differences in levels of humor acceptance and employment exist across the organizational and individual moderating variables. This was accomplished by performing a Chi-squared two-way contingency table analysis on the Likert-Scaled survey questions to test for homogeneity among the different populations of respondents as differentiated by our moderating variables.

The response frequency data was entered into two way contingency tables, with the moderating variable of interest differentiating among the different rows of the table and the various possible responses for the survey question of interest defining the different columns. For example, in determining the effect of industry type (manufacturing, service, research and development) on the responses to a given survey question with 5 possible responses, the data was entered into a contingency table consisting of 3 rows and 5 columns. Each column represented a possible survey response, and each row represented one of the three industry types. The point of this analysis was to determine if the way the

respondents answered the particular question was influenced by the type of industry they were in. In other words, did the respondents from research and development organizations answer the question in roughly the same way as the group of respondents from service and manufacturing organizations? This analysis keys on the *proportion* of each of the responses given by each industry type. For example, say that from the group of respondents from manufacturing organizations, 10% selected choice 1, 15% selected choice 2, 15% selected choice 3, 30% selected choice 4 and 30% selected choice 5. How does this compare to the way respondents from research and development organizations answered the question? If the industry type had no influence on the way this question was answered, then the distribution of responses provided by the research and development respondents should be roughly the same as those provided by manufacturing respondents.

		Question Response					I rows J Columns
		1	2	3	4	5	
Manufacturing		$n_{11}$	$n_{12}$	...	...	$n_{15}$	$H_0: p_{1j} = p_{2j} = \dots = p_{ij}$ $H_a: H_0 \text{ is not true.}$
R&D	:						
Service		$n_{31}$	...	...	...	$n_{33}$	

Figure 1. Two-Way Contingency Table Example

The null hypothesis in contingency table analysis is that all respondents are from the same overall population, and therefore, the response distribution for this question will be roughly the same for respondents from all three types of organizations. If the response

distributions, in fact, are significantly different among the three types of industries, the Chi-Squared test will indicate this by returning a low P-Value.

The total number of respondents to this survey was 48. In some cases it was necessary to modify the definitions of a "population" in order to gain sufficient density of data in the contingency table to perform the Chi-Squared analysis. For example, consider a question with 5 Likert-Scaled responses. In trying to assess the effects of respondent age on the responses to this question, the researchers originally envisioned segmenting the 48 responses into 5 age groups, or 5 "populations": 20-24 years; 25-30 years; 31-40 years, 41-50 years, and 51+ years. This resulted in a 5 x 5 contingency table with 25 cells; with only 48 total responses, it was likely that many cells would have an observed cell count less than 1. The Chi-Squared contingency table analysis lost statistical validity under these circumstances; the technique generally requires that all cells in a contingency table have an expected value greater than one. Since the expected value for a cell is determined from a composite of its own observed value and the observed value of other cells in its column, an observed cell count of zero causes a problem (Devore, 1991:581). Cochran (1952) notes that if any of the cell expected values are less than 1 or if more than 20% of the cell expected values are less than 5, the approximation may be poor. However, unpublished studies by various researchers indicate that these thresholds are overly conservative. Nevertheless, to increase the observed cell counts it became necessary to collapse the table and reduce the number of cells; this increased the overall data density for the table. This was done by re-allocating the data into fewer categories. In the case of age, the responses were re-allocated into only two categories: age 35 years and under, and over 35 years. For this example, re-allocation reduced the contingency table to a 2 x 5 table with 10 cells. Usually, this type of re-allocation would provide sufficient density of data in the contingency table to perform the Chi-Squared test for homogeneity. In the few cases where there was still not sufficient data, the table was

collapsed further by grouping multiple responses together into a single column. Again, the purpose of this analysis was to see if the moderating variable of interest in any way influenced the way in which the respondents answered the question. As such, the researchers had the flexibility to divide the categories and combine responses in any way that seemed appropriate.

All of the written comments provided by respondents, including those for both open ended and Likert-Scaled questions, were compiled into a single comment directory. The comments were grouped by survey question number and then further subgrouped by company. This allowed the researchers to visually determine what the overall sentiment was for each question for every company. The complete comment directory, minus the company designators, is provided as Appendix C.

### ***3.6 Limitations of the Research***

Due to the exploratory nature of this research, it only provides some very general notions as to the acceptance and employment of humor in the workplace. Since the sample consisted of only seven organizations in three different types of industries, the research does not provide overwhelming empirical evidence to support any *specific* conclusions about humor in the workplace. Rather, it serves as a point of departure for further research on the topic area by identifying the general attitudes that exist towards managed workplace humor and the level to which it is being employed. Another limitation of this research is that at present there is no commonly accepted operational definition of humor. In developing the survey the researchers tried to encourage respondents to look at their own organization with an open mind in deciding when and where humor was present, and what forms it took. Thus, in the absence of a concrete definition of humor, the survey respondents were left to formulate their own opinions of what constitutes humor. While this was desirable for our exploratory research, it makes it difficult to make any firm characterizations of workplace humor or the effects it has.

Another limitation of the research is the relatively small sample size. Only one organization in the sample was heavily involved in research and development; this naturally undermines any conclusions about the impact of humor in these organizations. Similarly, only one of the targeted manufacturing organizations responded to the survey. There was insufficient representation from both large and small organizations within each of the three industry types to make any significant statements about the combined effects of industry type and organizational size on the acceptance of workplace humor. Lastly, only four individual respondents were non-white, which inhibited the ability to make any significant statements about the effects of race as a moderating variable.

## **IV. Data Analysis**

### ***4.1 Overview***

The data analysis is logically grouped and presented according to the investigative questions that were developed and presented in Chapter I. Specifically, the data analysis was divided into eight major sections corresponding to the eight individual investigative questions that were presented in Chapter I. Each of these major sections includes the investigative question number, as well as the actual investigative question itself in the section heading. Within the body of each of these eight sections, we have presented the corresponding survey questions that were developed to answer the associated investigative question, along with the resulting response frequencies and moderating effects, if any. At the level of the survey questions, the analysis is presented utilizing graphical representations of the response distributions to facilitate the discussion.

### ***4.2 Investigative Question #1: To What Extent is Humor in the Workplace Accepted by Workers and Management?***

Our first objective in designing this study was to determine the acceptability of workplace humor by both workers and management. As such, our first investigative question sought to characterize the extent to which humor in the workplace is accepted by workers and management. The literature has suggested that humor may offer many attractive benefits, but even if humor could be demonstrated to provide these benefits, they would be of no consequence if employees and managers felt that humor was simply not an appropriate addition to the daily work routine. In this case, humor would not be a viable tool for achieving its purported benefits in the workplace. Thus, it became important that we assess the current level at which humor is accepted by workers and management; this required that we develop multiple survey questions in order to

investigate several aspects that would ultimately lead to determining overall acceptability. These survey questions and their attendant results are presented below.

**4.2.1 Survey Question Q-1.** Survey question Q-1 was aimed at directly measuring the respondent's attitude towards the acceptability of humor in the workplace. Survey question Q-1 and its associated responses were stated as follows:

To what extent do *you* feel that the expression of humor in the workplace is acceptable?

- 1 TOTALLY ACCEPTABLE
- 2 MODERATELY ACCEPTABLE
- 3 SLIGHTLY ACCEPTABLE
- 4 BORDERLINE
- 5 SLIGHTLY UNACCEPTABLE
- 6 MODERATELY UNACCEPTABLE
- 7 TOTALLY UNACCEPTABLE

**4.2.1.1 Q-1 Response Frequency.** As evidenced by Figure 2, the survey respondents heavily favored choice 1, *Totally Acceptable*. Most individuals in the organizations surveyed felt that the expression of humor in the workplace was either *Totally Acceptable* (73%) or *Moderately Acceptable* (21%).

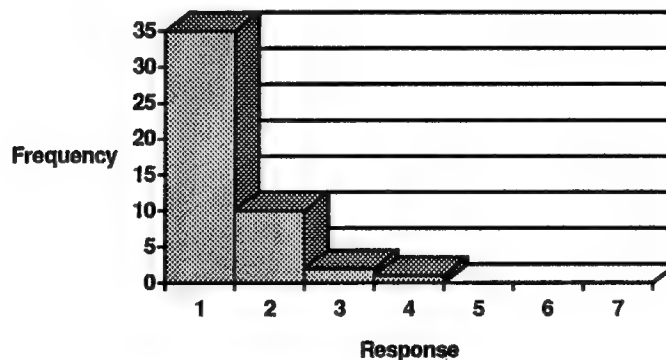


Figure 2. Survey Question Q-1 Response Frequency

**4.2.1.2 Q-1 Moderating Variables.** When we looked at the effect of gender on the survey responses, the distribution of the responses was too thinly dispersed across the contingency table to draw any valid statistical inferences as to its moderating effects. To overcome this problem, we collapsed the data down into two categories of responses: those that felt humor was *Totally Acceptable*, and those that felt that it was other than *Totally Acceptable*. Doing this made some intuitive sense to us because none of the respondents indicated anything less than borderline acceptability. When we reduced the data in this way, the Chi-Squared test for homogeneity revealed that a statistically significant difference (P-Value = 0.1541) between the genders emerged, with men being more likely than women to find humor *Totally Acceptable*. (84% of the men sampled found workplace humor *Totally Acceptable*, while only 65% of the women sampled responded *Totally Acceptable*). Most of the remaining respondents for both genders felt that humor was *Moderately Acceptable* in the workplace.

When we looked at the moderating effect of race, we again had to collapse the responses down to those that responded *Totally Acceptable* and those that indicated some level other than *Totally Acceptable*. Upon doing this, we noted that 77% of whites felt that the expression of workplace humor was *Totally Acceptable*, while only 25% of the black respondents felt that humor was *Totally Acceptable*. This is certainly statistically significant (P-Value = .0243), but it is important to note that there were only 4 black respondents in our sample of 48 individuals. Of the 75% of blacks that answered other than *Totally Acceptable*, two of them indicated that workplace humor was *Moderately Acceptable* and one indicated that it was only *Slightly Acceptable*.

The size of a respondent's organization did not seem to impact their response to question Q-1, nor did the length of time that an individual had spent in their organization. This surprised us, as we had expected that individuals very new to an organization might be uncomfortable with the expression of workplace humor, while those individuals who



had been with the organization for a while might feel more at ease with it. Nonetheless, the data did not support this rationale.

**4.2.2 Survey Question Q-2.** Survey question Q-2 was aimed at characterizing workers' perceptions of the appropriateness of management involvement in promoting workplace humor. Survey question Q-2 and its associated responses were stated as follows:

Do you feel that is appropriate for management to actively encourage the expression of humor in the workplace during the daily work routine?

- 1 YES
- 2 NO

**4.2.2.1 Q-2 Response Frequency.** Figure 3 depicts the distribution of responses for question Q-2. It is readily apparent that the survey respondents overwhelmingly (92%) felt that it was appropriate for management to actively encourage the expression of workplace humor.

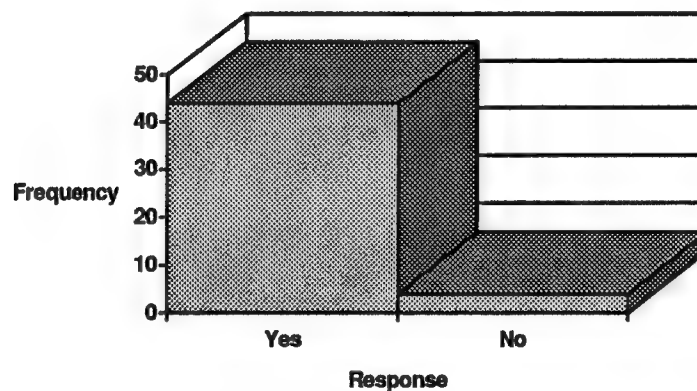


Figure 3. Survey Question Q-2 Response Frequency

**4.2.2.2 Q-2 Moderating Variables.** The data suggests that the type of industry in which a respondent worked had an impact on their response to this question (P-Value = 0.07). In service organizations, only 3% of the respondents indicated that it was *not appropriate* for management to encourage workplace humor; in manufacturing organizations, 14% felt it was *not appropriate*; and in research and development organizations, 29% felt it was *not appropriate*.

Another interesting observation was made when we examined the impact of the level of the employee on responses to this question; of the four respondents that answered *No* to question Q-2, three of them came from employees in the group consisting of clerical/secretarial, non-technical specialists, and skilled laborers.

When we looked at the impact of company size, we found some interesting results. 16.7% of the respondents from small companies indicated that it was *not appropriate* for management to actively encourage the expression of humor during the daily routine, whereas only 3.3% of the respondents from large companies felt it was inappropriate.

**4.2.3 Survey Question Q-3.** Survey question Q-3 was aimed at determining the level at which the individual respondent perceived that humor was acceptable during the daily work routine. Survey question Q-3 and its associated responses were stated as follows:

Which statement *best* characterizes your feelings about humor in the workplace?

- 1 THERE IS NO ROOM FOR HUMOR IN THE WORKPLACE
- 2 HUMOR IN THE WORKPLACE IS ONLY ACCEPTABLE AFTER HOURS AND DURING BREAKS
- 3 HUMOR IN THE WORKPLACE IS ACCEPTABLE DURING THE DAILY WORK ROUTINE, BUT ON A LIMITED BASIS
- 4 HUMOR IS ACCEPTABLE UNDER ALL BUT A FEW CIRCUMSTANCES DURING THE DAILY WORK ROUTINE.
- 5 HUMOR IN THE WORKPLACE IS ACCEPTABLE AT ALL TIMES DURING THE DAILY WORK ROUTINE

**4.2.3.1 Q-3 Response Frequency.** Figure 4 depicts the distribution of responses to survey question Q-3. The majority (67%) of the respondents indicated that *Humor is acceptable under all but a few circumstances during the daily work routine* (response 4). Most of the remaining respondents (25%) indicated that *Humor in the workplace is acceptable during the daily work routine, but on a limited basis* (response #3).

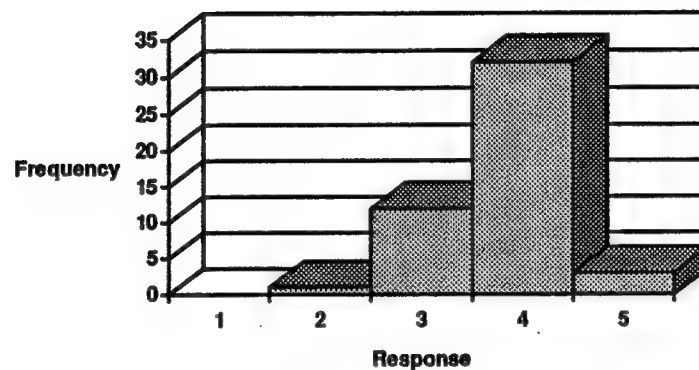


Figure 4. Survey Question Q-3 Response Frequency

**4.2.3.2 Q-3 Moderating Variables.** When we looked at the impact of respondent age on survey question Q-3, we had to collapse the responses into two age groups: those less than age 35 and those older than age 35. When we did this, we noted that 83% of the respondents in the older age group felt that *Humor is acceptable under all but a few circumstances during the daily work routine* (response 4); however, only 52% of the younger group gave this response. Looking at the data from another perspective we find that 75% of the respondents who chose response #3 were under 35, while 60% of the respondents who selected response #4 were in older than 35.

When we examined the impact of gender on this question, the majority of both sexes felt that *Humor was acceptable under all but a few circumstances during the daily*

*work routine*. However, we noted that 35% of the women felt that humor was acceptable *on a limited basis*, whereas only 10.5% of the men felt this way. 84% of the men chose response #4, while only 55.2% of the women did so.

When we looked at the effect of an organization's size on responses to this question, we noted that twice as many respondents in *large* organizations selected response #4 as did #3, but in *small* organizations, over *four times* more respondents selected choice #4 as the number who selected choice #3 (Figure 5).

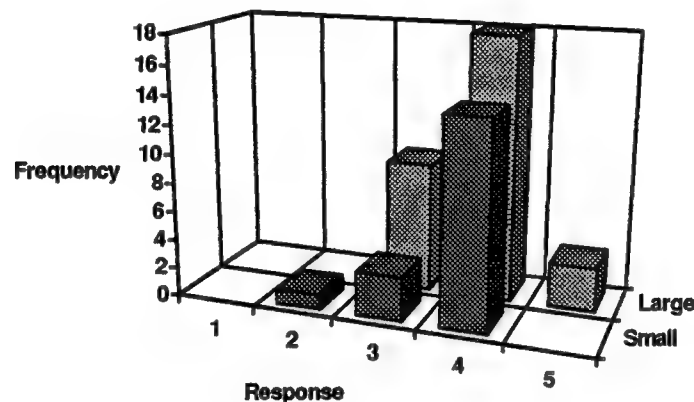


Figure 5. Survey Question Q-3 Response Frequency by Company Size

**4.2.4 Survey Question Q-20.** The level to which an individual participates in workplace humor was seen as an important indicator of their acceptance of it. If workplace humor was present and the employee chose not to participate, it might suggest they did not find such humor acceptable. On the other hand, if a respondent indicated he frequently did participate in workplace humor, it is likely that he finds it acceptable. While there might be several reasons an employee would *not* participate in humor other than their finding it unacceptable, frequently choosing to participate in humor is a good indicator that an employee *does* find it acceptable. The survey question and its associated responses were stated as follows:

How often do you participate in humorous behavior in the workplace?

- 1 NEVER
- 2 SOMETIMES
- 3 OFTEN
- 4 ALMOST ALWAYS
- 5 ALWAYS

**4.2.4.1 Q-20 Response Frequency.** Figure 6 illustrates the distribution of the responses to survey question Q-20. 62.5% of respondents indicated that they *Often* participated in workplace humor. This is the middle of the road response, but it may have been seen as the most appropriate response even by those who participate in humorous workplace behavior a great deal. We interpret this response as indicating positive attitudes towards workplace humor. Only nine respondents indicated that they *Sometimes* participated in humorous workplace behavior.

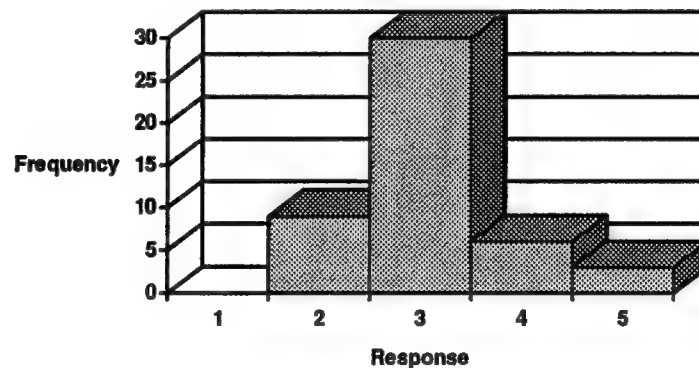


Figure 6. Survey Question Q-20 Response Frequency

**4.2.5 Survey Question Q-21.** We felt that this question would provide significant insight into the respondent's acceptance of workplace humor. If the individual employee frequently inhibited his sense of humor, it would suggest to us that he felt humor was

unacceptable in the workplace or would not be well received. The survey question and its associated responses were stated as follows:

How often do you inhibit your sense of humor in the workplace?

- 1 NEVER
- 2 SOMETIMES
- 3 OFTEN
- 4 ALMOST ALWAYS
- 5 ALWAYS

**4.2.5.1 Q-21 Response Frequency.** Figure 7 illustrates the distribution of responses to question Q-21. 73% of respondents indicated that they *Sometimes* inhibited their sense of humor in the workplace, while nearly 17% said they *Often* did so. We interpret the response to this question as indicating that while many employees feel humor is appropriate in the workplace, most are not completely uninhibited about expressing it there.

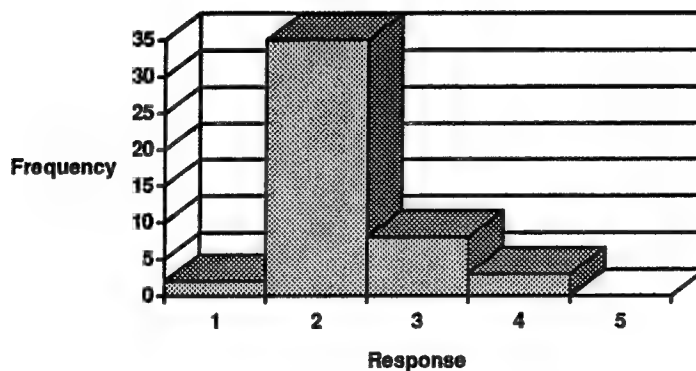


Figure 7. Survey Question Q-21 Response Frequency

**4.2.5.2 Moderating Variables.** Employee level appeared to impact responses to this question, as lower leveled employees seemed to inhibit their sense of

humor more often than did higher level employees. Respondents were separated into four categories of employment level: Level 1 included unskilled labor; Level 2 included skilled labor, clerical/secretarial, and non-technical specialists; Level 3 included supervisors, line managers, technical specialists, and other professional level employees; and Level 4 included division managers and above. Figure 8 illustrates the percentage of responses from each of the employment levels. As can be seen in Figure 8, the respondents who inhibited their workplace humor more frequently fell at lower levels in the organization. Category 4 employees were unanimous in claiming that they only *Sometimes* inhibited their workplace humor.

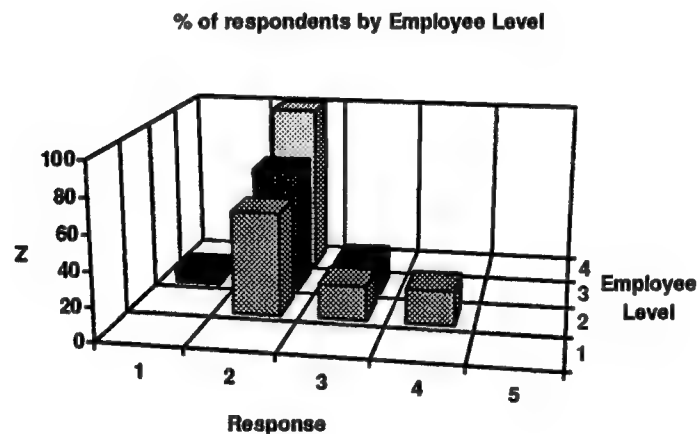


Figure 8. Survey Question Q-21 Response By Employee Level

We also noticed that race seemed to impact responses to this question, as black respondents seemed to inhibit their sense of humor more frequently. It is important to reiterate that only four survey respondents indicated their race as anything other than white, and all of these were black. Even so, it is striking to note the difference in the distribution of responses between blacks and whites (Figure 9). 50% of the blacks

indicated that they *Often* inhibited their sense of humor in the workplace; only 14% of the whites chose this response. Similarly, 25% of the blacks said they *Almost Always* inhibited their humor, whereas only 4% of the whites did so.

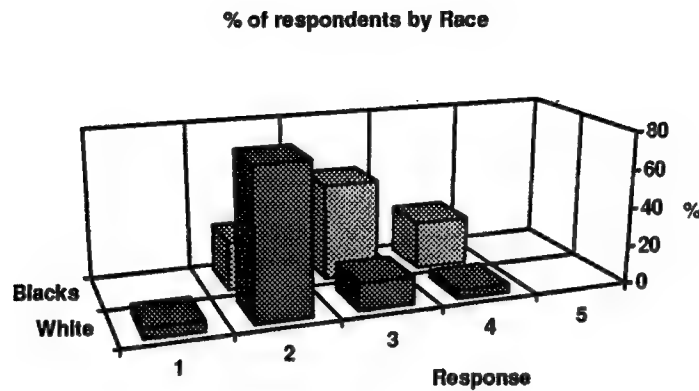


Figure 9. Survey Question Q-21 Response By Race

**4.2.6 Survey Question Q-22.** We felt that this question also provided valuable insight into a respondent's attitude toward workplace humor. If the respondent indicated they were often offended by workplace humor, they would be less likely to find it acceptable. Another benefit of this question was that if we received a large number of responses from employees indicating that they were frequently offended by humor, it might suggest that humor in the workplace was often of an inappropriate nature. Survey question Q-22 and its associated responses were stated as follows:

How often are you offended by expressions of humor in your workplace?

- 1 NEVER
- 2 SOMETIMES
- 3 OFTEN
- 4 ALMOST ALWAYS
- 5 ALWAYS



**4.2.6.1 Q-22 Response Frequency.** Figure 10 illustrates the distribution of responses to survey question Q-22. 50% of the respondents indicated they were *Never* offended by workplace humor, while only 48% indicated they were *Sometimes* offended by workplace humor. We felt that the one respondent who indicated that he was *Almost Always* offended by workplace humor may have misread the question, since he was very positive about humor in the workplace in the rest of his survey.

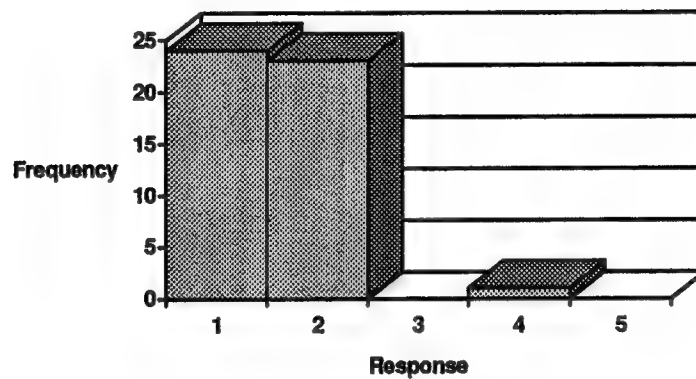


Figure 10. Survey Question Q-22 Response Frequency

**4.2.6.2 Moderating Variables.** We noticed that employees at lower levels in the organization were offended less often by humor in the workplace; the moderating effects of employee level are illustrated in Figure 11. 67% of the "level 2" employees in our sample reported that they were *Never* offended by expressions of workplace humor, while the remaining 33% said they were *Sometimes* offended. This is in contrast to the 58% of the employees at "level 3" who reported that they *Sometimes* were offended by workplace humor; only 42% of "level 3" employees reported that they *Never* were offended. At the "level 4" employee level, 17% of respondents said they were *Often* offended by workplace humor.

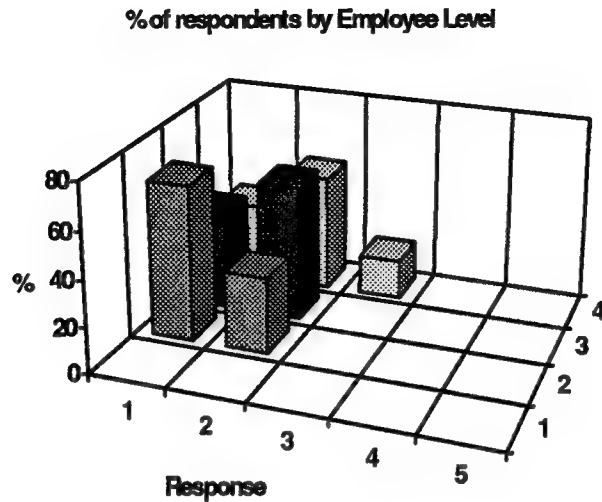


Figure 11. Survey Question Q-22 Response By Employee Level

**4.2.7 Survey Question Q-23.** This question was also seen as providing important insight into respondent acceptance of humor. Employees who often disapprove of coworker's humor probably view workplace humor as somewhat unacceptable. Survey question Q-23 and its associated responses were stated as follows:

How often do you find yourself disapproving of coworkers' attempts at humor?

- 1 NEVER
- 2 SOMETIMES
- 3 OFTEN
- 4 ALMOST ALWAYS
- 5 ALWAYS

**4.2.7.1 Q-23 Response Frequency.** Figure 12 illustrates the distribution of responses to survey question Q-23. 50% of respondents reported that they were *Never* offended by coworker's attempts at humor; while 46% reported that they were *Sometimes* offended.

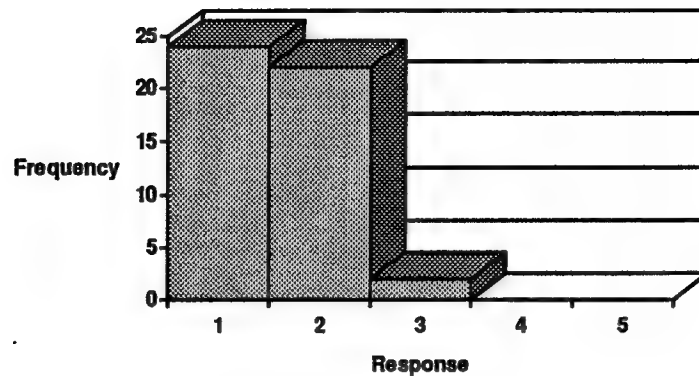


Figure 12. Survey Question Q-23 Response Frequency

**4.2.8 Survey Question Q-24.** Again, this question was seen as providing insight into acceptability of workplace humor. Employees who bother to actively admonish their peers for expressions of workplace humor are less likely to find such humor acceptable. However, it is also possible that the respondent merely works with individuals with exceptionally poor taste.

How often do you actively express disapproval to your coworkers for their use of humor?

- 1 NEVER
- 2 SOMETIMES
- 3 OFTEN
- 4 ALMOST ALWAYS
- 5 ALWAYS

**4.2.8.1 Q-24 Response Frequency.** Figure 13 illustrates the distribution of responses to survey question Q-24. 75% of respondents reported that they *Never* admonish their peers for their attempts at humor; 25% reported that they *Sometimes* did.

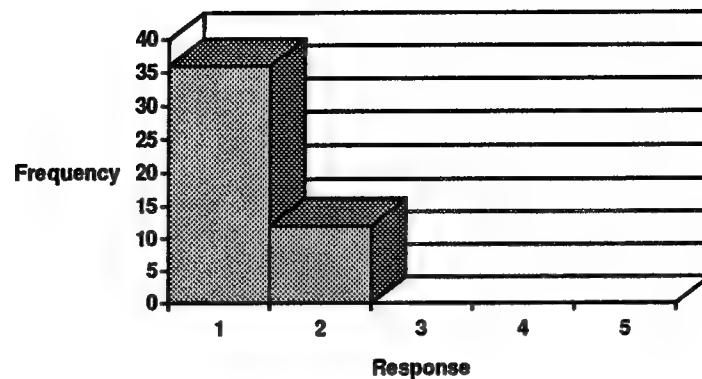


Figure 13. Survey Question Q-22 Response Frequency

**4.2.9 Survey Question Q-29.** This question was intended to assess how comfortable a respondent was in exhibiting his sense of humor in the workplace relative to how much he expressed it outside the workplace. This provided some way to assess the level of acceptability of workplace humor in the eyes of the respondent. Question Q-29 and its associated responses were stated as follows:

You express your sense of humor at work \_\_\_\_\_ you do outside of the workplace.

- 1 MORE OFTEN THAN
- 2 LESS OFTEN THAN
- 3 THE SAME AS

**4.2.9.1 Q-29 Response Frequency.** As illustrated in Figure 14, the majority (58%) of respondents felt that they express their sense of humor *less* in the workplace than they do outside of the workplace; although, a sizable number (35%) felt that they expressed their sense of humor in the workplace *the same as* they do outside of the workplace.

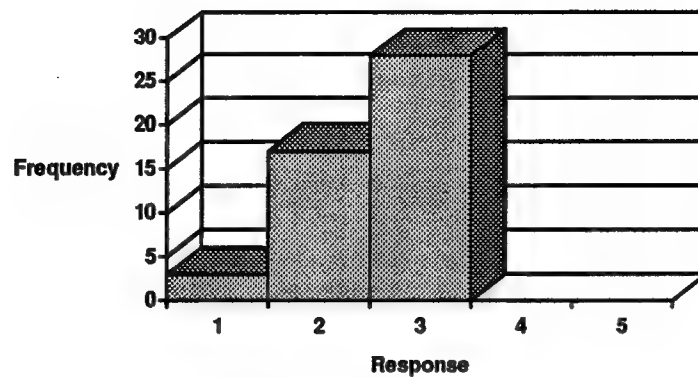


Figure 14. Survey Question Q-29 Response Frequency

**4.2.9.2 Moderating Variables.** Respondent age seemed to impact responses to this question (Figure 15), as the majority of respondents over age 35 appear to express their sense of humor at work *as frequently* as they do outside work. Nearly half of those under age 35, however, indicated that they express their sense of humor *less* at work than they do outside work.

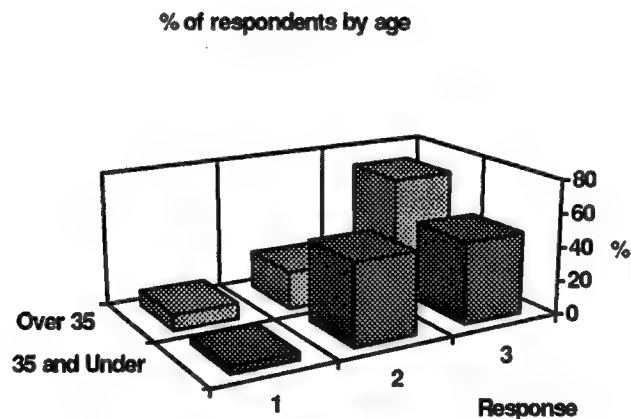


Figure 15. Q-29 Response by Age

### ***4.3 Investigative Question #1A: To What Extent is Humor Actively Promoted/Stifled by Management?***

Part of our goal in conducting this research was to determine not only how *acceptable* workplace humor was, but to determine how much it was currently endorsed by an organization's managers. Some organizations actively promote humor, while others maintain that humor is not acceptable within the confines of the corporate culture. In this matter, it is the opinion of the employees that count. If top level management *says* that they promote humor, but the employees of the organization do not exhibit humor for fear of retribution, then humor is not promoted in that organization. Humor cannot freely exist unless the employees feel comfortable expressing it, and that is why we ask the employees what their perceptions are regarding management's treatment of humor. We asked for this information via two open ended questions and one Likert scaled multiple choice question.

***4.3.1 Survey Question Q-11.*** Survey question Q-11 was aimed at gathering examples of ways in which management actively supports or promotes humor in the workplace. Survey question Q-11 was stated as follows:

Please list things that the management of your organization has done to support or promote workplace humor: \_\_\_\_\_

***4.3.1.1 Discussion of Q-11 Responses.*** This was an open-ended question and, as such, it drew a wide range of responses. The complete listing of responses to this question can be found in Appendix C. Most respondents reported that their managers encouraged workplace humor through some means, though approximately 14% of those who responded to this question answered by writing "Nothing", and 42% of survey respondents did not answer this question at all.

Several respondents from a medium sized service organization told the story of an old "white board" in their staff lounge. This board was casually used by employees as a medium to communicate humorous stories or personal opinions on a variety of subjects.

Often a potential topic would be written up on the board early in the day, and then other employees would write witty remarks on the subject as they passed through the lounge during the remaining course of the business day.

Company management noticed the decaying state of the board and the purpose for which it was being used, and purchased a brand new white board which was then installed in the lounge. In this case the management of the organization expended company resources specifically for the purpose of facilitating this form of open, lighthearted communication.

Other respondents cited an "on-line joke database", the frequent posting of cartoons on company bulletin boards, annual talent shows, and management use of humor in daily interactions with employees. Some managers distributed jokes and cartoons electronically over the organization's electronic mail system, while others were seen as specifically hiring individuals with an obvious sense of humor. One respondent recalled a manager's habit of randomly leaving rubber spiders and insects on employee's desks. Many respondents felt that managers promoted workplace humor simply by providing pleasant, comfortable working conditions and by interacting with employees in a friendly manner.

**4.3.2 Survey Question Q-27.** This question was designed to evaluate employee perceptions of management treatment of workplace humor in the form of their impressions of their immediate supervisor's attitudes. Question Q-27 and its associated responses were stated as follows:

Which of the following *best* characterizes your immediate supervisor's treatment of humor in the workplace?

- 1 HE/SHE DISCOURAGES HUMOR IN THE WORKPLACE
- 2 HE/SHE TOLERATES HUMOR IN THE WORKPLACE
- 3 HE/SHE GENERALLY ACCEPTS, BUT DOES NOTHING TO ENCOURAGE, HUMOR IN THE WORKPLACE
- 4 HE/SHE ENCOURAGES HUMOR IN THE WORKPLACE
- 5 HE/SHE STRONGLY PROMOTES HUMOR IN THE WORKPLACE

**4.3.2.1 Q-27 Response Frequency.** Figure 16 illustrates the distribution of responses to survey question Q-27. 48% of respondents felt that their supervisors *Encouraged* humor in the workplace, while approximately 40% felt that their supervisor *Generally Accepted, but did nothing to promote* workplace humor.

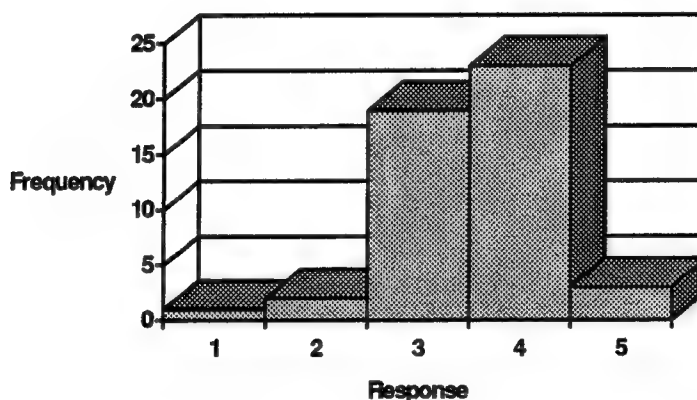


Figure 16. Survey Question Q-27 Response Frequency

**4.3.2.2 Moderating Variables.** As illustrated in Figure 17, responses to survey question Q-27 seemed to be influenced by the type of industry in which the respondent's organization operated. Service industry respondents selected Response #4 59% of the time, while research and development respondents concentrated their answers on Response #3, selecting this choice 57% of the time. Respondents from manufacturing



organizations selected Response #3 86% of the time, and represented the only group that did not select Responses #4 or #5 at all.

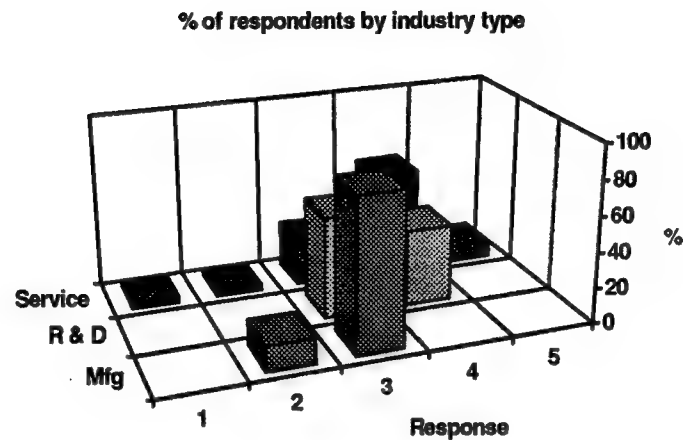


Figure 17. Survey Question Q-27 Response by Industry Type

**4.3.3 Survey Question Q-28.** This was another open-ended question to give respondents an opportunity to relate how they perceived their immediate supervisor's treatment of humor. The question was stated as follows:

Please list things that your supervisor has done or said that indicate to you his/her attitudes towards humor in the workplace (if none, so state).\_\_\_\_\_

**4.3.3.1 Discussion of Q-28 Responses.** One respondent reported that his supervisor praised his expressions of humor in meetings for helping to keep things in perspective. Another supervisor reportedly told her employees that "she liked them to have fun", while another praised an employee for their efforts to distribute cartoons. Some supervisors took time to tell employees humorous stories about their own lives, while others showed support for humor merely by expressing appreciation for employee attempts at humor.

However, several supervisors were not praised for their behavior regarding humor. One respondent characterized his supervisor as "mean and vindictive"; others were noted for "not condoning visiting or casual conversation." Some felt their supervisors had "No sense of humor", while another stated that their supervisor "often made small, jabbing remarks to subordinates."

Overall, it was striking to note that the results were fairly consistent among respondents from the same organization. In one organization most respondents might be very positive about their supervisor's treatment of humor, while the respondents from another organization were consistent in disparaging the way humor was handled. Each organization seemed to have an overall attitude regarding humor that was consistently evident through its employees. Appendix C contains a complete listing of responses to this question.

#### ***4.4 Investigative Question #2: To What Extent Does Humor Currently Exist in the Workplace?***

Another aspect that we were interested in determining was the extent to which humor currently exists in the workplace, and, when it did exist, what forms it took. It is essential to understand the degree to which humor currently permeates the work environment; the nature and extent of existing workplace humor represents valuable information regarding the role humor may already play.

As we had thought in the case of humor acceptability, we felt that the type of industry might significantly impact the extent to which humor exists in the organization. It seems plausible to assume that in a manufacturing organization, where employees are working on assembly lines and operating machinery in relative isolation from others, the environment might not be conducive to the open expression of humor. On the other hand,

an office environment in which employees work closely together might be very conducive to the expression of humor.

**4.4.1 Survey Question Q-4.** This was more of a general question asked to satisfy our own general interests. The question and its associated responses were stated as follows:

Do you consider yourself as having a good sense of humor?

- 1 YES
- 2 NO

**4.4.1.1 Q-22 Response Frequency.** The literature on humor studies indicated that *everyone* considers themselves as having a good sense of humor. The responses we received support this; every respondent indicated that they felt they had a good sense of humor. In other words, every respondent to our survey felt that they had a general appreciation for humor.

**4.4.2 Survey Questions Q-5 and Q-6.** Survey questions Q-5 and Q-6 were asked as a pair to assess how frequently respondents exercise their sense of humor in the workplace relative to how frequently they exercise it outside the workplace. If respondents indicated that they exercise their humor inside the workplace less frequently than they did outside the workplace, it would suggest that there was something in the work environment which inhibits their free expression of humor. Questions Q-5 and Q-6 and their associated responses were stated (respectively) as follows:

How frequently do you exercise your sense of humor *outside* of the workplace?

- 1 I NEVER EXERCISE MY SENSE OF HUMOR.
- 2 I EXERCISE MY SENSE OF HUMOR VERY INFREQUENTLY.
- 3 I EXERCISE MY SENSE OF HUMOR SOMEWHAT INFREQUENTLY.
- 4 I EXERCISE MY SENSE OF HUMOR SOMEWHAT FREQUENTLY.
- 5 I EXERCISE MY SENSE OF HUMOR VERY FREQUENTLY.
- 6 I CONSTANTLY EXERCISE MY SENSE OF HUMOR.

To what extent do you exercise your sense of humor *in* of the workplace?

- 1 I NEVER EXERCISE MY SENSE OF HUMOR.
- 2 I EXERCISE MY SENSE OF HUMOR VERY INFREQUENTLY.
- 3 I EXERCISE MY SENSE OF HUMOR SOMEWHAT INFREQUENTLY.
- 4 I EXERCISE MY SENSE OF HUMOR SOMEWHAT FREQUENTLY.
- 5 I EXERCISE MY SENSE OF HUMOR VERY FREQUENTLY.
- 6 I CONSTANTLY EXERCISE MY SENSE OF HUMOR.

**4.4.2.1 Q-5 and Q-6 Response Frequency.** Response distributions for these two questions are shown in Figure 18. The results suggest that respondents are indeed less comfortable expressing humor in the work environment than outside.

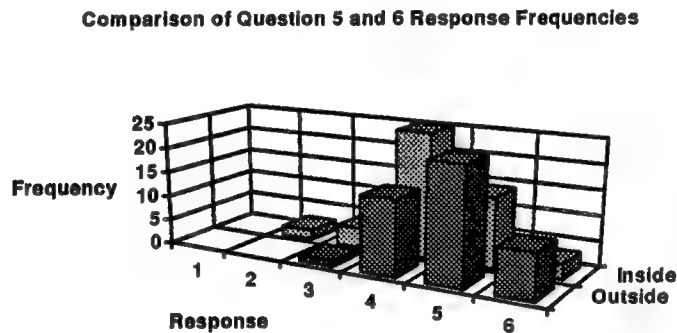


Figure 18. Survey Questions Q-5 and Q-6 Response Frequencies

**4.4.3 Survey Question Q-19.** Survey question Q-9 was developed to get an indication of how often the respondent encountered humor in their organization. Survey question Q-19 and its associated responses were stated as follows:

How often do you encounter humorous material/behavior in your workplace?

- 1 NEVER
- 2 SOMETIMES
- 3 OFTEN
- 4 ALMOST ALWAYS
- 5 ALWAYS

**4.4.3.1 Q-19 Response Frequency.** Figure 19 illustrates the distribution of responses for survey question Q-19. It is readily apparent that the distribution of responses is almost perfectly centered around the response *Often*, with 44% of the respondents selecting that choice. 23% of the respondents said that they *Sometimes* encounter humorous material/behavior in their workplace, while another 27% said that they *Almost Always* encounter it.

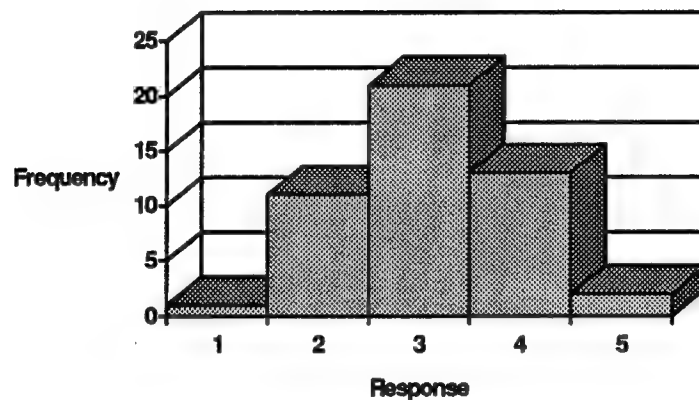


Figure 19. Survey Question Q-19 Response Frequency

**4.4.4 Survey Question Q-26.** This question is directly relevant to determining the extent to which humor currently exists in the workplace. If humor is only expressed among close friends in an organization, secretly whispering jokes to each other in the privacy of the supply room, it would strongly suggest that the expression of humor in that organization is generally not accepted. On the other hand, if high ranking company management openly displays humor in interactions with employees and external customers, this level of expression provides a strong indicator that humor is not only accepted in that organization but seen as an integral part of the corporate culture. The extent to which humor exists in an organization is also an essential indicator of its

acceptability in general. Survey question Q-26 and its associated responses were stated as follows:

Which of the following best characterizes the level at which humor is expressed in your work environment?

- 1 HUMOR IS NOT EXPRESSED IN MY WORKPLACE
- 2 HUMOR IS EXPRESSED ONLY BETWEEN COWORKERS OF EQUAL GRADE/JOB LEVEL
- 3 HUMOR IS EXPRESSED BETWEEN COWORKERS AND SUPERVISORS
- 4 HUMOR IS EXPRESSED BETWEEN COWORKERS, SUPERVISORS, AND TOP MANAGEMENT
- 5 HUMOR IS EXPRESSED FREELY NOT ONLY WITHIN THE ORGANIZATION, BUT BETWEEN THE ORGANIZATION AND ITS CUSTOMERS (EXTERNALLY).

**4.4.4.1 Q-26 Response Frequency.** As illustrated in Figure 20, responses to this question were fairly distributed. The response most frequently selected was that *Humor is expressed freely not only within the organization, but between the organization and its customers (externally)*. Nonetheless, the responses varied widely with each level of workplace humor characterized by the response choices being represented by some portion of the respondents.

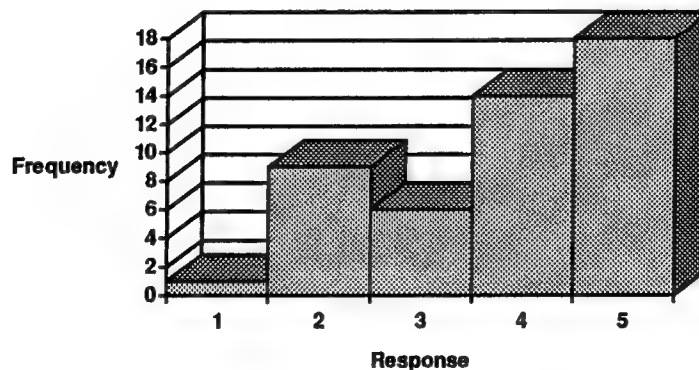


Figure 20. Survey Question Q-26 Response Frequency

**4.4.4.2 Moderating Variables.** Figure 21 illustrates the moderating effect that Industry Type had on question Q-26. It reveals that respondents from research and development organizations overwhelmingly (100%) felt that *Humor is expressed freely not only within the organization, but between the organization and its customers (externally)*; respondents from service organizations, on the other hand, had a much more varied response pattern, with the greatest number of respondents indicating that *Humor is expressed between coworkers, supervisors, and top management*; In marked contrast, respondents from manufacturing were more likely to indicate that *Humor is expressed only between coworkers of equal grade/job level*. While this data suggests significant differences in levels of humor expressed in different industry types, we must note that only one manufacturing and one research and development organization participated in this survey.

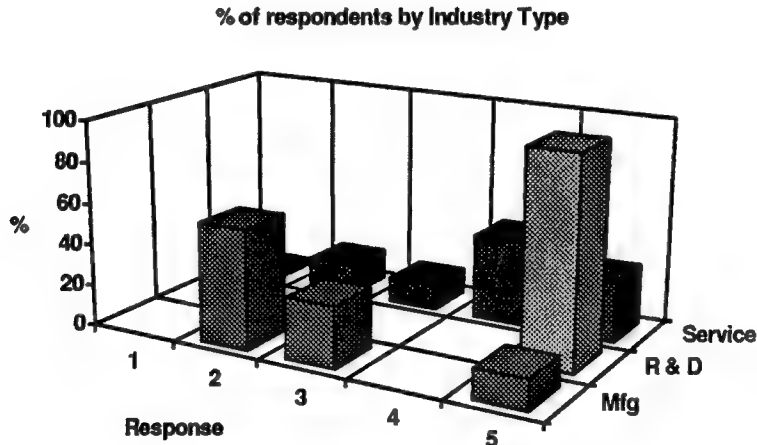


Figure 21. Q-26 Response Frequency by Industry Type

**4.4.5 Survey Question Q-34.** Survey Question Q-34 was developed for those individuals who worked in organizations that were part of a much larger company. It attempted to determine if the respondent perceived different levels of humor existing between their organization and the larger company to which it belonged. Question Q-34 was stated as follows:

If you answered **NO** to question #33, please briefly explain how you think the levels of humor are different: \_\_\_\_\_

**4.4.5.1 Discussion of Q-34 Responses.** A few of the organizations that participated in this survey were part of a larger company. Many of the respondents indicated that they were unaware of the level at which humor exists in the larger organization. However, several comments were made from different respondents regarding the disparagement of humor by the larger, parent organizations. One individual noted that the larger organization's culture "is very stringent and work-oriented." Another individual from the same organization suggested that the larger organization was "more conservative." Respondents from another organization with a Japanese parent company commented that in Japan, "...everything is serious and no jokes are permitted at work". Another individual from the same organization indicated that he felt that the older management with a different cultural background was to blame for lower levels of humor in the larger organization.



#### ***4.5 Investigative Question #2A: In What Forms Does Humor Exist in the Workplace?***

***4.5.1 Survey Question Q-11.*** Survey question Q-11 provides significant insight into the forms in which humor exists in the workplace; however, it was discussed in section 4.3.1, in support of Investigative Question #1A. The reader is directed to section 4.3.1.1 for a discussion of the responses to Q-11.

***4.5.2 Survey Question Q-25.*** Survey question Q-25 attempted to assess what forms of humor that individuals perceived as offensive. Question Q-25 was stated as follows:

If you have ever been offended by attempts at humor in your workplace, what aspect of the humor or humorous behavior caused you to take offense? (e.g., sexual/racial slur, insensitive, poorly timed, derogatory, etc.) \_\_\_\_\_

***4.5.2.1 Discussion of Q-25 Responses.*** 58% of the survey participants responded to this open-ended question. By far, racial and sexual slurs/comments seemed to be viewed as the most offensive forms that humor could take on in the workplace. Poorly timed and insensitive humor was also noted as being offensive to several respondents. Likewise, vulgar language and derogatory comments towards individual's work performance or religious beliefs were viewed as offensive by multiple respondents.

***4.5.3 Survey Question Q-28.*** Survey question Q-28 directly answers this investigative question, but was discussed in section 4.3.3, in support of Investigative Question #1A. The reader is directed to section 4.3.3.1 for a discussion of the responses to Q-28.

#### **4.6 Investigative Question #3A: To What Extent Do Workers Perceive That Humor Has An Effect On Productivity?**

**4.6.1 Survey Question Q-7.** Survey question Q-7 was developed to distinguish between those respondents who believe that humor has some impact on productivity and those who don't. Survey question Q-7 and its associated responses were stated as follows:

To what extent do you believe that the expression of humor in the workplace **either positively or negatively** influences productivity?

- 1 HAS NO EFFECT ON PRODUCTIVITY (skip to Question Q-12)
- 2 HAS SOME EFFECT ON PRODUCTIVITY (POSITIVE OR NEGATIVE)

**4.6.1.1 Q-7 Response Frequency.** As illustrated in Figure 22, the respondents to the survey felt overwhelmingly that Humor had some impact on Productivity. Three respondents felt that Humor had *No Effect on Productivity*; it is interesting to note that none of these three respondents had a four year college degree.

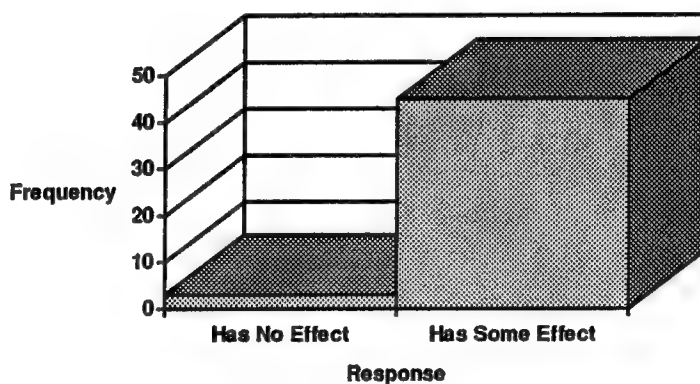


Figure 22. Survey Question Q-7 Response Frequency

**4.6.2 Survey Question Q-8.** Survey question 8 was designed to characterize the extent to which workers perceived that humor could in some way *enhance* productivity. Survey question Q-8 and its associated responses were stated as follows:

In your opinion, to what extent does the expression of humor in the workplace *in some way enhance* workplace productivity?

- 1 DOES NOT ENHANCE PRODUCTIVITY
- 2 SLIGHTLY ENHANCES PRODUCTIVITY
- 3 MODERATELY ENHANCES PRODUCTIVITY
- 4 SIGNIFICANTLY ENHANCES PRODUCTIVITY
- 5 VERY SIGNIFICANTLY ENHANCES PRODUCTIVITY

**4.6.2.1 Q-8 Response Frequency.** As illustrated in Figure 23, the bulk of the respondents felt that humor *significantly enhances productivity*. The only respondents who felt that humor *very significantly enhances productivity* (choice 5) were males. It is also interesting to note that while in the preceding question the three respondents who felt that humor had no effect on creativity (and hence did not answer *this* question) had no 4 year college degree, 70% of the *remaining* respondents with no college degree answered #4 to this question.

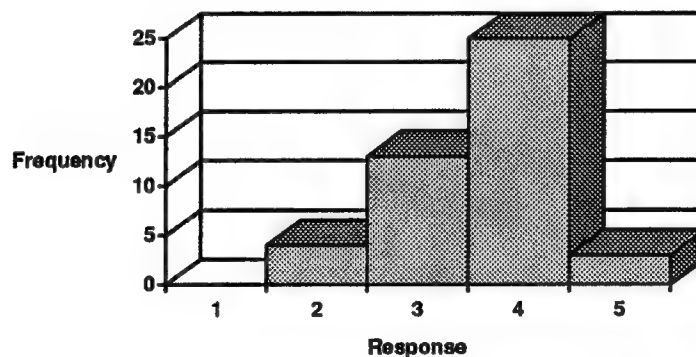


Figure 23. Survey Question Q-8 Response Frequency

**4.6.2.2 Q-8 Moderating Variables.** We noticed a statistically significant difference in the sample indicating that respondents from larger organizations were less emphatic about the degree to which humor enhanced creativity (P-Value = .0563). Figure 24 illustrates how 87% of the respondents from small organizations felt that humor could *significantly* or *very significantly* enhance productivity, while only 48% of the respondents from large organizations fell into those categories. Conversely, 52% of the respondents from the large organizations felt that humor could only *slightly* or *moderately* enhance productivity, while only 13% of the respondents from small organizations selected one of these choices.

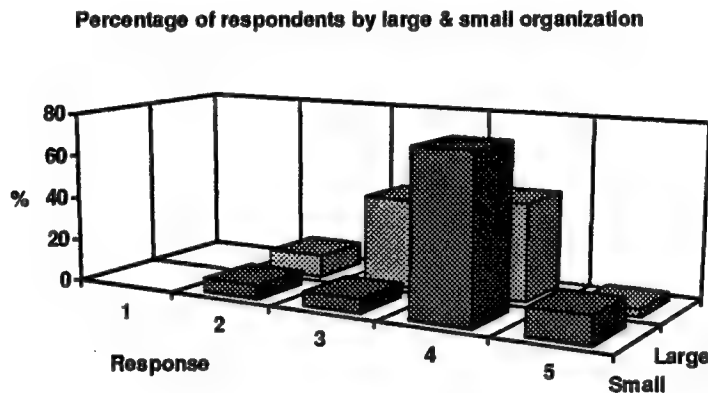


Figure 24. Survey Question Q-8 Response by Organization Size

**4.6.3 Survey Question Q-9.** Survey question Q-9 and its associated responses were stated as follows:

In your opinion, to what extent does the expression of humor in the workplace actually **inhibit** workplace productivity?

- 1 HAS NO NEGATIVE IMPACT ON PRODUCTIVITY
- 2 SLIGHTLY INHIBITS PRODUCTIVITY
- 3 MODERATELY INHIBITS PRODUCTIVITY
- 4 SIGNIFICANTLY INHIBITS PRODUCTIVITY
- 5 VERY SIGNIFICANTLY INHIBITS PRODUCTIVITY

**4.6.3.1 Q-9 Response Frequency.** Figure 25 illustrates the distribution of responses to survey question Q-9. Overall, 84% of the respondents felt that humor had *no negative impact* on or only *slightly inhibited* Productivity (Responses 1 and 2 combined).

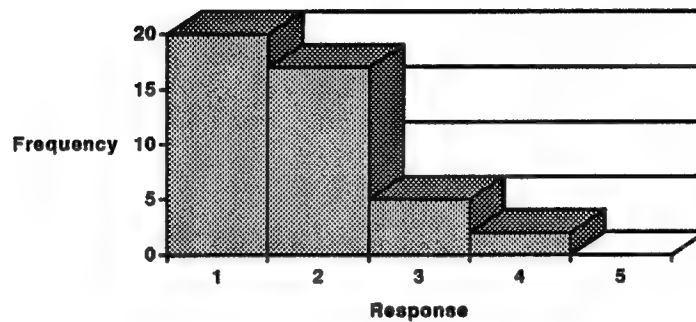


Figure 25. Q-9 Response Frequency

**4.6.3.2 Q-9 Moderating Variables.** Figure 26 illustrates how respondent age seemed in part to determine whether a respondent perceived humor as having either no impact or only a slight impact (P value = 0.0019). 75% of the respondents who indicated humor had *no negative impact on productivity* (Response #1) were over 35 years of age; 71% of the respondents who indicated that humor *slightly inhibited productivity* (Response #2) were under 35 years of age.

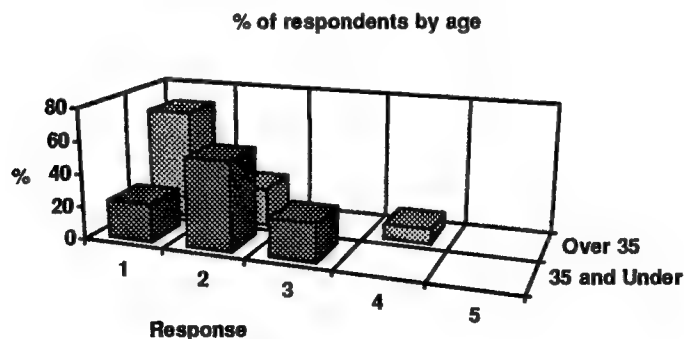


Figure 26. Survey Question Q-9 Response Frequency by Age

As illustrated in Figure 27, gender also appeared to moderate an individual's perception of the impact of humor on productivity. Both of the respondents who felt that humor *significantly inhibited* productivity (Response #4), and 4 of the 5 who felt that humor *moderately inhibited* productivity (Response #3) were female.

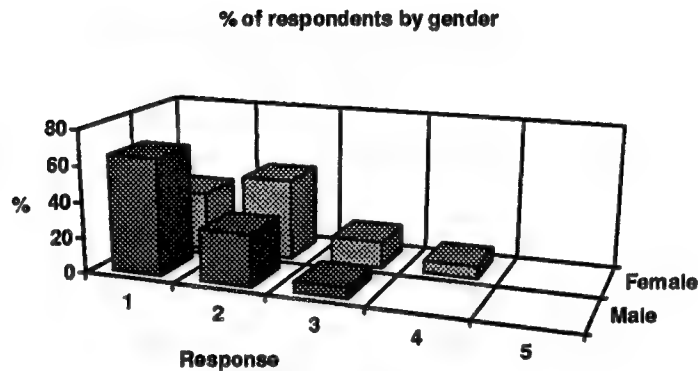


Figure 27. Survey Question Q-9 Response by Gender

#### ***4.7 Investigative Question #3B: To What Extent Do Workers Perceive That Humor Has An Effect On Creativity?***

**4.7.1 Survey Question Q-12.** Survey question Q-12 was developed to distinguish between those respondents who believe that humor has some impact on creativity and those who don't. Survey question Q-12 and its associated responses were stated as follows:

To what extent do you believe that the expression of humor in the workplace **either positively or negatively** influences creativity?

- 1 HAS NO EFFECT ON CREATIVITY (skip to the section *immediately following Question Q-15*)
- 2 HAS SOME EFFECT ON CREATIVITY(POSITIVE OR NEGATIVE)

**4.7.1.1 Q-10 Response Frequency.** as illustrated in Figure 28, the bulk of the respondents felt that the expression of workplace humor could positively influence creativity. We did notice that 80% of the respondents who felt that humor had "no effect" on creativity were male.

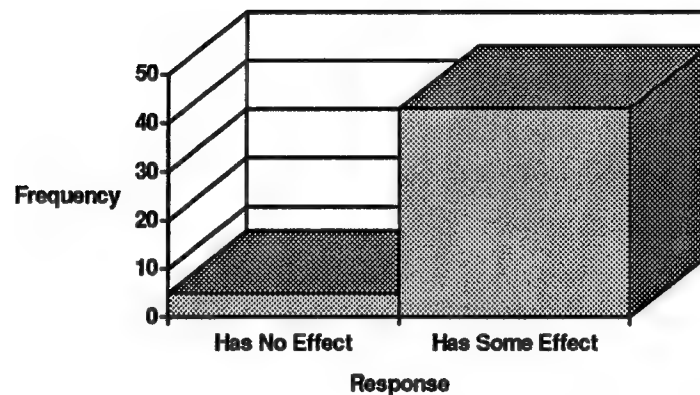


Figure 28. Survey Question Q-12 Response Frequency

**4.7.2 Survey Question Q-13.** Survey question 13 was designed to characterize the extent to which workers perceived that humor could in some way enhance creativity. Survey question Q-13 and its associated responses were stated as follows:

In your opinion, to what extent does the expression of humor in the workplace *in some way enhance* workplace creativity?

- 1 DOES NOT ENHANCE CREATIVITY
- 2 SLIGHTLY ENHANCES CREATIVITY
- 3 MODERATELY ENHANCES CREATIVITY
- 4 SIGNIFICANTLY ENHANCES CREATIVITY
- 5 VERY SIGNIFICANTLY ENHANCES CREATIVITY

**4.7.2.1 Q-13 Response Frequency.** As illustrated in Figure 29, 58% of the respondents felt that workplace humor could *Significantly Enhance* creativity.

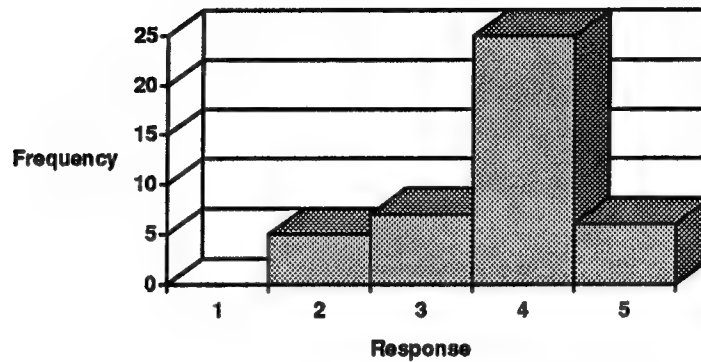


Figure 29. Survey Question Q-13 Response Frequency

**4.7.2.2 Q-13 Moderating Variables.** When we examined the impact of race on the responses, we found a significant effect (P Value = .00006), though we cautiously note that we only had 4 black respondents to the survey. As Figure 30 shows, 75% of the Black respondents felt that workplace humor only *slightly* enhanced creativity, while most of the white respondents (62%) felt that humor would *significantly* enhance creativity.

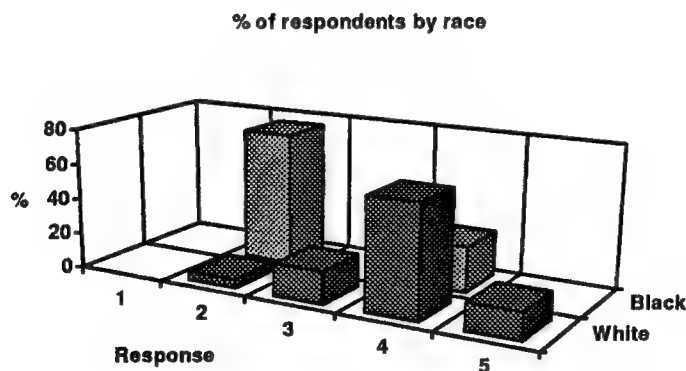


Figure 30. Survey Question Q-13 by Race



We noticed that workgroup mission also varied the responses to this question. Those respondents who felt the mission of their workgroup was manufacturing indicated that humor could moderately enhance creativity, while those whose workgroups were involved in service and research and development indicated that humor had a *significant* ability to enhance creativity. These results are illustrated in Figure 31.

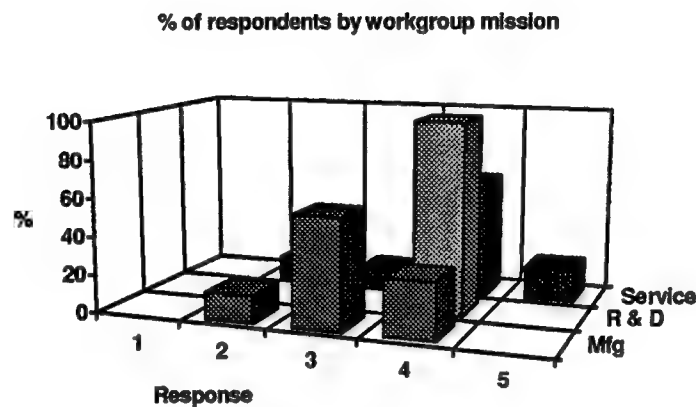


Figure 31. Survey Question Q-13 by Workgroup Mission

**4.7.3 Survey Question Q-14.** This question was aimed at gauging the individual's feelings as to the extent to which humor may inhibit creativity. The question and its associated responses were stated as follows:

In your opinion, to what extent does the expression of humor in the workplace actually **inhibit** workplace creativity?

- 1 HAS NO NEGATIVE IMPACT ON CREATIVITY
- 2 SLIGHTLY INHIBITS CREATIVITY
- 3 MODERATELY INHIBITS CREATIVITY
- 4 SIGNIFICANTLY INHIBITS CREATIVITY
- 5 VERY SIGNIFICANTLY INHIBITS CREATIVITY

**4.7.3.1 Q-14 Response Frequency.** As illustrated in Figure 32, 65% of the respondents felt that Workplace Humor had *No Negative Impact* on creativity.

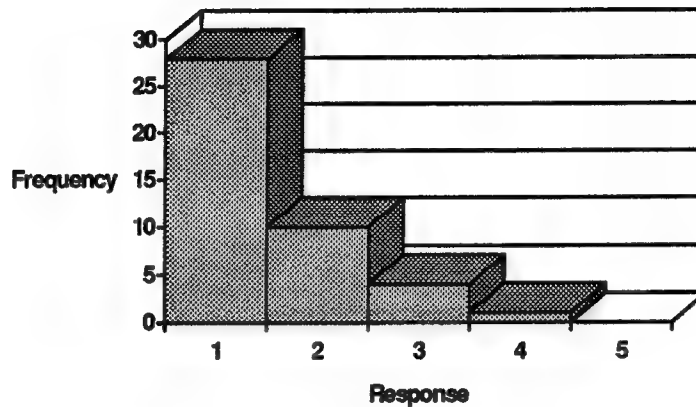


Figure 32. Survey Question Q-14 Response Frequency

**4.7.3.2 Q-14 Moderating Variables.** When we examined the impact of age on the respondent's perceptions of the extent to which humor inhibits creativity, we noticed that 80% of the respondents over age 35 felt humor had *no negative impact on creativity* (Figure 33). The frequency of response for this age group dropped off sharply as we looked at responses indicating some inhibiting effects. For those respondents under age 35, however, a greater percentage of respondents felt that humor could have some inhibiting effects on creativity.

The only respondents indicating that humor *moderately* or *significantly* inhibits creativity (Responses 3 and 4) did not have a four year college degree.

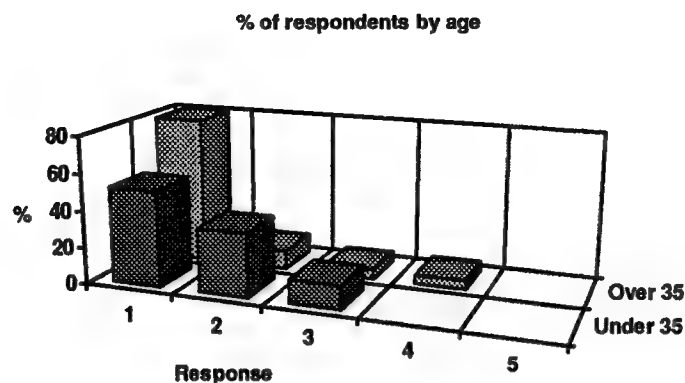


Figure 33. Survey Question Q-14 Response by Age

#### ***4.8 Investigative Question #3C: To What Extent Do Workers Perceive That Humor Has An Effect On Other Factors?***

**4.8.1 Survey Question Q-16.** Survey question Q-16 was broken into six individual questions (Q-16.1 through Q-16.6), each aimed at characterizing the level to which the respondent agreed with the potential of humor to provide certain benefits. The question and its associated responses were stated as follows:

1	2	3	4	5
Definitely Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neutral	Slightly Agree	Definitely Agree

Do you agree that humor in the workplace has the potential to:

Q-16.1 Reduce stress?	1	2	3	4	5
Q-16.2 Build workgroup cohesion?	1	2	3	4	5
Q-16.3 Reduce tension between workers and management?	1	2	3	4	5
Q-16.4 Reduce tension between coworkers?	1	2	3	4	5
Q-16.5 Increase morale in the workplace?	1	2	3	4	5
Q-16.6 Defuse tense situations?	1	2	3	4	5

**4.8.1.1 Q-16 Response Frequency.** Figure 34 simultaneously depicts the response frequencies for the various components of question 16. Most respondents clearly felt that humor had the potential to have a variety of positive influences in the workplace.

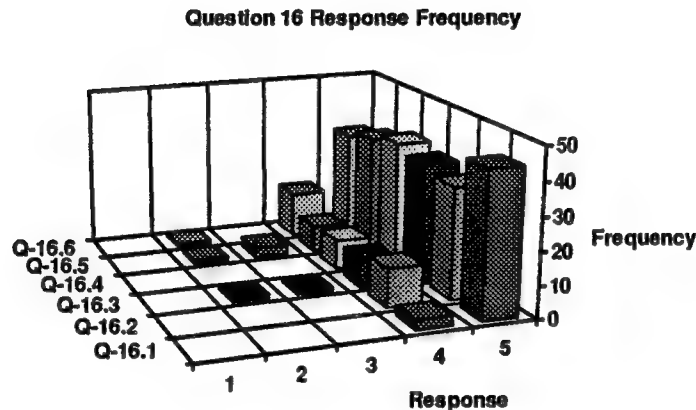


Figure 34. Survey Question Q-16 Response Frequencies

**4.8.1.2 Q-16 Moderating Variables.** When we looked at the effect of the length of time that a respondent held their current position had on the respondent's opinion regarding humor's ability to reduce tension in the workplace (Q-16.3), we observed the following: Respondents with less time in their current position were less convinced of humor's ability to reduce tension between workers and management (Figure 35). In fact, all employees with over 3 years in their current position *definitely agreed* that workplace humor had the potential to reduce tension between workers and management. Only workers with less than three years in their current position identified anything other than this choice.

% of respondents by length of time in current position  
(Q-16.3)

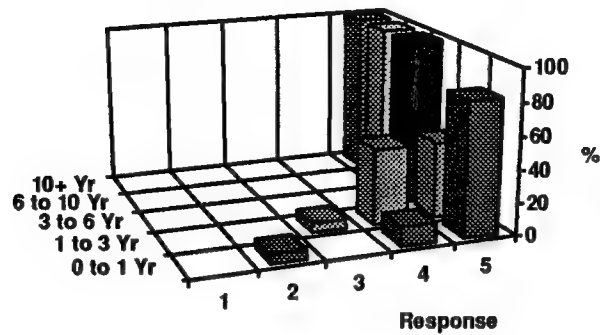


Figure 35. Survey Question 16.3 by Length of Time in Current Position

Of the respondents who indicated that humor was only slightly effective at reducing tension between workers (Q-16.4), 89% were women. This represented 28% of the total women respondents. In other words, a greater percentage of men than women *definitely agreed* that humor had the ability to reduce tension between workers; women were slightly less convinced than men that humor could have this effect. Figure 36 illustrates this moderating effect of gender.

% of respondents by gender

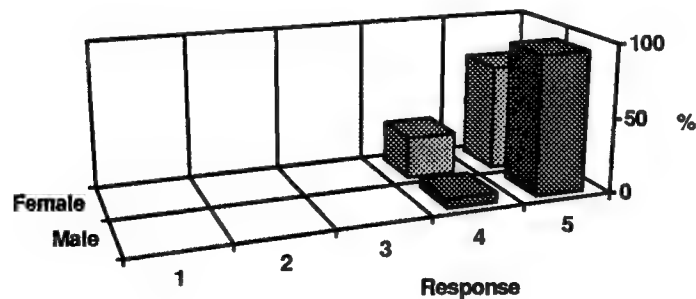


Figure 36. Survey Question Q-16.4 by Gender

The type of industry in which the respondent's organization competed seemed to influence the way in which he felt about humor's ability to defuse tense situations (Q-16.6). As represented in Figure 37, service industry respondents, as a group, had the most conviction that humor could defuse tense situations. Respondents from research and development organizations also favored Response #5, but they were more evenly split between this option and Response #4. Manufacturing organization respondents actually favored Response #4 over #5, and represented the only group with any #2 responses, *slightly disagree*.

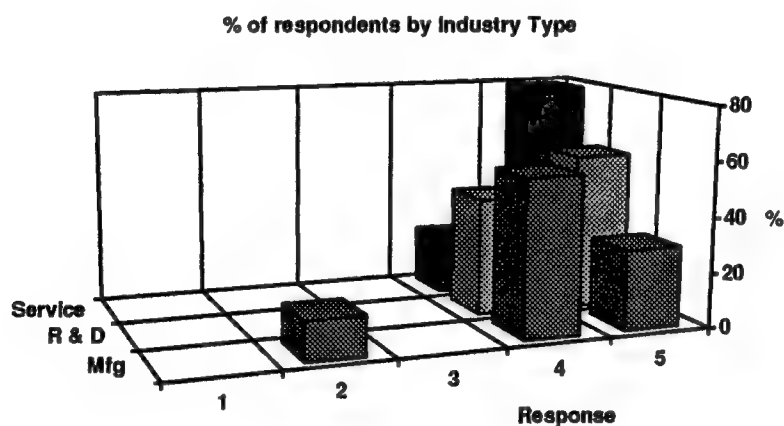


Figure 37. Survey Question Q-16.6 by Industry Type

As Figure 38 illustrates, gender also had some effect on a respondent's feelings towards humor's ability to defuse tense situations (Q-16.6). Male respondents almost exclusively selected Response #5; Female respondents were more evenly divided between Responses #4 and #5. This suggests that, for our sample, men were slightly more convinced than women that workplace humor could *defuse tense situations*. This is somewhat consistent with the finding above that men felt more strongly than women that humor could reduce tension between employees.

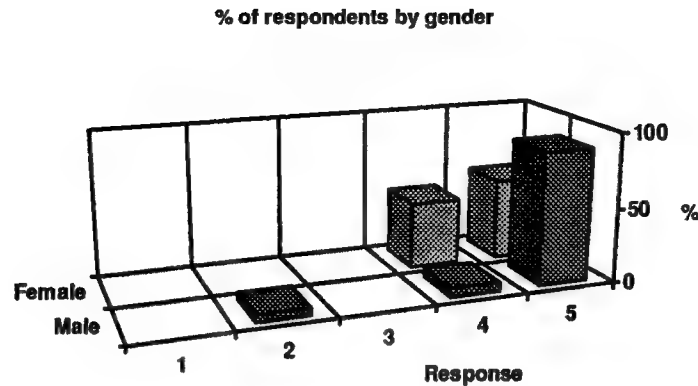


Figure 38. Survey Question Q-16.6 Response by Gender

**4.8.2 Survey Question Q-17.** We felt this question was necessary to provide the respondent with the ability to indicate any potential benefits that she felt strongly about, but that we hadn't listed. Survey question Q-17 was stated as follows:

Please list any other potential *benefits* that you think can be derived from the expression of humor in the workplace. \_\_\_\_\_

**4.8.2.1 Discussion of Q-17 Responses.** Respondents to this question cited things such as attracting new employees, establishing and defining relationships between workers, building relationships with clients, enhancing problem solving and brainstorming abilities, stress reduction, and an improvement in overall workplace attitudes. One respondent commented, "Everyone gets along better and enjoys coming to work more;" another noted that "Humor relaxes outsiders - it makes them feel you are happy to see them." Some respondents felt that workplace humor increased the desire for employees to come to work and improved the likelihood that customers would go away satisfied. Another respondent noted that workplace humor would make people more content with their jobs, which would reduce employee turnover, which in turn would result in less

money being spent on training new employees. The complete listing of these comments can be found at Appendix C.

**4.8.3 Survey Question Q-18.** Survey question Q-18 was designed to balance against question Q-17 to make sure that we allowed the respondent to indicate both benefits and detriments of humor in the workplace. The survey question was stated as follows:

Please list any potential *detriments* that you think can result from the expression of humor in the workplace. \_\_\_\_\_

**4.8.3.1 Discussion of Q-18 Responses.** Respondents to this question cited a wide variety of potential problems they saw with workplace humor. Many respondents pointed out that some forms of humor might "hurt someone's feelings", or be "degrading to some workers." The need for appropriate timing and placement of jokes was frequently pointed out, and many respondents noted that humor could easily get out of hand. An employee of a health care organization noted that patients might feel that humor exhibited on the part of the staff might suggest that the staff did not care about the problems of the patients, or that they did not take their jobs seriously. Respondents also pointed out that humor could inhibit concentration on demanding tasks, and that too much humor could lead people towards unprofessional behavior. Finally, a few respondents noted that humor could lead to safety problems in the workplace.

**4.9 Investigative Question #4: To What Extent Do Employees Perceive That Management Can Successfully Employ Humor As A Catalyst For Productivity and/or Creativity?**

**4.9.1 Survey Question Q-10.** Survey question Q-10 directly asks the respondent the extent to which he believes that management can enhance productivity by deliberately



infusing humor into the work environment. Survey question Q-10 and its associated responses were stated as follows:

To what extent do you believe that **management** can enhance productivity by **deliberately ensuring** that humor is present in the workplace?

- 1 MANAGEMENT CANNOT ENHANCE PRODUCTIVITY THROUGH HUMOR.
- 2 PRODUCTIVITY CAN BE SLIGHTLY ENHANCED IF MANAGEMENT ENSURES THE PRESENCE OF HUMOR.
- 3 PRODUCTIVITY CAN BE MODERATELY ENHANCED IF MANAGEMENT ENSURES THE PRESENCE OF HUMOR.
- 4 PRODUCTIVITY CAN BE SIGNIFICANTLY ENHANCED IF MANAGEMENT ENSURES THE PRESENCE OF HUMOR.
- 5 PRODUCTIVITY CAN BE VERY SIGNIFICANTLY ENHANCED IF MANAGEMENT ENSURES THE PRESENCE OF HUMOR.

**4.9.1.1 Q-10 Response Frequency.** As illustrated in Figure 39, The bulk of the respondents felt that management can *moderately* or *significantly* (Responses #3 and #4, respectively) enhance productivity by taking deliberate steps to ensure that humor exists.

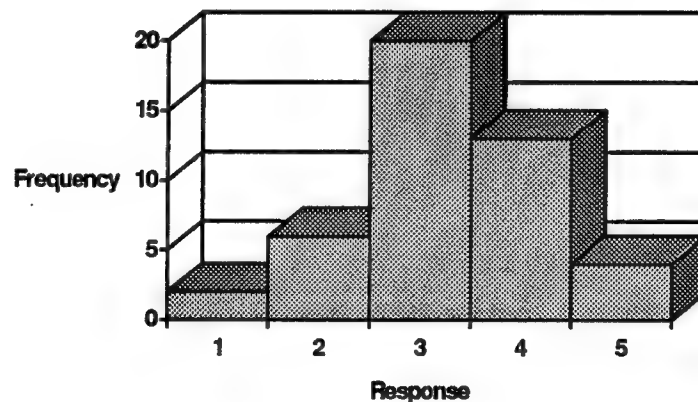


Figure 39. Survey Question Q-10 Response Frequency

**4.9.1.2 Q-10 Moderating Variables.** Figure 40 depicts the moderating effects of age on the distribution of responses to survey question Q-10. The vast majority of the respondents under age 35 felt that management could *moderately* enhance productivity by ensuring the presence of humor, while the majority of respondents who felt productivity could be *significantly* enhanced were over age 35.

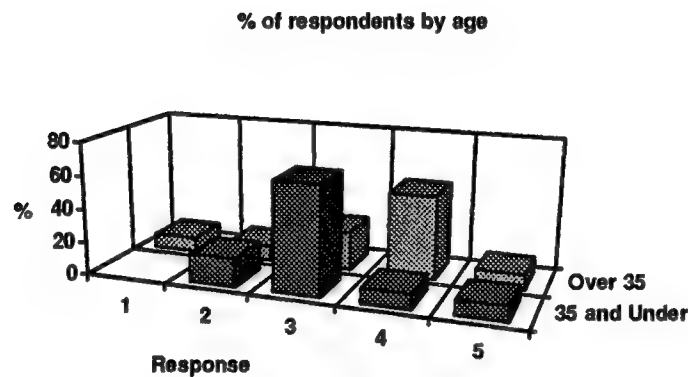


Figure 40. Survey Question Q-10 Response by Age

The type of industry in which the respondent was employed also seemed to influence their responses to question Q-10. Those individuals in research and development organizations overwhelmingly felt that management could *significantly* enhance productivity by ensuring workplace humor, while respondents from both service and manufacturing organizations seemed to mostly feel that management could only *moderately* enhance productivity.

When looking at the effect of education level (Figure 41), it appeared that those respondents not holding a four year college degree felt more strongly about management's ability to positively influence productivity through humor than did those with 4 year degrees.

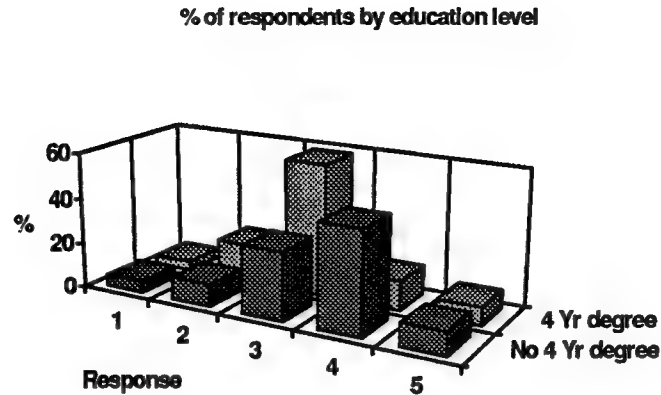


Figure 41. Survey Question Q-10 Response by Education Level

A similar effect was noted when examining the influence of organizational size on responses (P-Value = .0031). As can be seen in Figure 42, individuals belonging to small organizations were more inclined to feel that management can enhance productivity by insuring the presence of humor.

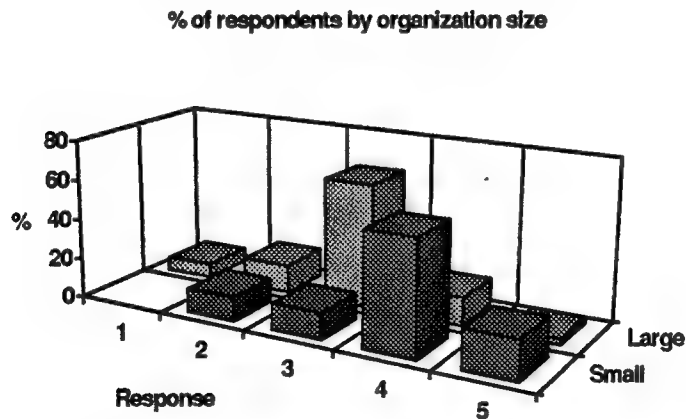


Figure 42. Survey Question Q-10 Response by Organization Size

**4.9.2 Survey Question Q-15.** Survey question Q-15 directly asks the respondent the extent to which he believes that management can enhance creativity by deliberately infusing humor into the work environment. Question Q-15 and its associated responses were stated as follows:

**Q-15** To what extent do you believe that **management** can enhance creativity by **deliberately ensuring** that humor is present in the workplace?

- 1 MANAGEMENT CANNOT ENHANCE CREATIVITY THROUGH HUMOR.
- 2 CREATIVITY CAN BE SLIGHTLY ENHANCED IF MANAGEMENT ENSURES THE PRESENCE OF HUMOR.
- 3 CREATIVITY CAN BE MODERATELY ENHANCED IF MANAGEMENT ENSURES THE PRESENCE OF HUMOR.
- 4 CREATIVITY CAN BE SIGNIFICANTLY ENHANCED IF MANAGEMENT ENSURES THE PRESENCE OF HUMOR.
- 5 CREATIVITY CAN BE VERY SIGNIFICANTLY ENHANCED IF MANAGEMENT ENSURES THE PRESENCE OF HUMOR.

**4.9.2.1 Q-15 Response Frequency.** The distribution of responses to survey question Q-15 is illustrated in Figure 43. As can be seen, there was a wide variation in responses with most responses having some representation. No moderating variables seemed to have any impact on the responses to this question.

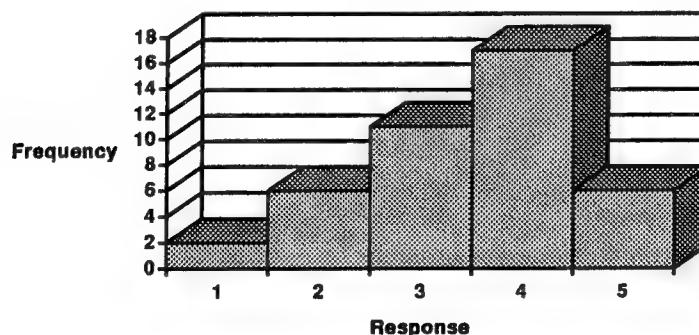


Figure 43. Survey Question Q-15 Response Frequency

#### ***4.10 Summary of Data Analysis***

This completes the presentation of the data and the subsequent statistical and subjective analyses. Due to the bulk of data that was presented, numerous important findings require presentation in a more capsulized form. Chapter V was designed to provide these capsulized results along with the general research conclusions and recommendations that can be reasonably inferred from the literature review, methodology and survey results.

## **V. Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations**

### ***5.1 Summary***

This study assessed the extent to which humor is both accepted and employed in the workplace for the potential enhancement of productivity and creativity. This assessment was accomplished via the means of both a detailed literature review and a comprehensive survey of the workforce.

The literature review focused primarily on issues pertaining to humor, including its definition, relevant theories, and its utility and appropriateness in the workplace; it also highlighted some innovative ways in which humor is being employed by companies such as Kodak, Southwest Airlines, and Sun Microsystems. Taken collectively, the literature revealed the lack of a universally accepted definition of humor, due in great part to humor being both situation and individual specific; it is difficult, if not impossible, to construct one single definition of humor that adequately accounts for all of the possible forms that it may take in different situations and amongst different individuals. Similarly, no unifying theory of humor emerged from the literature. However, theories based upon incongruity appeared to be the most widely discussed theories for explaining what makes something intrinsically humorous. Taken from another perspective, cognitive appraisal theories, such as the Superiority Theory of humor, seem to be the most widely discussed theories for explaining why someone might find an event or situation humorous.

The literature review also highlighted numerous benefits that humor has been credited with providing; these include heightened productivity and creativity, reduced stress, increased workgroup cohesion, relief from boredom, reduced absenteeism and turnover, increased motivation and morale, increased openness, and strengthened communications. The literature also stressed the appropriateness and importance of the use of humor in the workplace as a management tool for the potential realization of these

benefits. However, the literature did not bear any empirical research supporting many of the purported benefits of humor in the workplace. Most notably, there appeared to be a distinct lack of substantiating data to support the claim that gains in productivity and creativity can be realized through the employment of humor in the workplace. This finding became the backbone of our initial research thrust; namely, to characterize the extent to which the presence of humor in the workplace affects productivity and creativity. Unfortunately, the lack of prior research on workplace humor, coupled with the difficulty associated with measuring productivity and creativity, forced us to approach the research from a much more introductory and exploratory perspective. As such, our thrust became one of characterizing the extent to which humor is currently accepted and employed in the workplace, and gauging workers' perceptions of the impact that humor can have on both productivity and creativity, as well as several other claimed benefits.

To gather the necessary data to make this assessment, we developed and administered a comprehensive survey aimed at characterizing individuals' perceptions of humor in the workplace, and its ability to influence both productivity and creativity. The survey measured acceptability of humor in the workplace, the extent to which it is employed, and its perceived effects on productivity, creativity and more. The survey was administered to seven companies representing manufacturing, research and development, and service organizations. The resulting data was analyzed for trends and the moderating effects of several potential moderating variables, including organization size, industry type, and a whole host of other demographical information. The resulting analysis of the data provided valuable insight into workers' perceptions about the acceptability and benefits of humor in the workplace. This insight could prove to be invaluable to both civilian and government managers alike, as they each grasp for ways to improve the productivity and creativity of a shrinking workforce.

## **5.2 Conclusions**

Our research and analysis generated five groups of conclusions related to our research objectives. The first group focuses on characterizing the overall acceptance of humor in the workplace, highlighting those factors that appear to have a moderating effect on an individual's level of acceptance. The second group provides insight into the extent to which humor is currently employed within workplace organizations. The third group characterizes the perceptions of workers as to the effects of humor on productivity, as well as their perceptions as to whether management can enhance an organization's productivity by deliberately promoting and supporting workplace humor. The fourth group characterizes the perceptions of workers as to the effects of humor on creativity, and their perceptions as to whether management can enhance creativity by deliberately ensuring workplace humor exists. The fifth and final group focuses on the perceptions of workers about humor's effect on other factors such as stress and workgroup cohesion.

**5.2.1 Acceptance of Humor in the Workplace.** The results of our survey data analysis suggest that workers in manufacturing, research and development, and service organizations generally find humor in the workplace acceptable; 73% of those responding indicated that humor was totally acceptable in the workplace, and another 21% felt it was moderately acceptable. It is interesting to note that both females and blacks were more likely to view humor in the workplace as less than totally acceptable. When looking at the frequency at which humor is deemed acceptable, 67% felt it was acceptable under all but a few circumstances during the daily work routine. Additionally, the data suggests that workers overwhelmingly find the encouragement of workplace humor by management appropriate.

**5.2.2 Employment of Humor in the Workplace.** We developed our assessment of the extent to which humor is employed in the workplace from three perspectives: the extent to which humor is actively promoted or stifled by management; the level at which



humor is expressed in organizations; and the forms in which humor exists in the workplace.

In analyzing the employment of humor from the first perspective, the data suggest that management generally accepts or encourages humor, and rarely stifles it. 54% of those surveyed indicated that their supervisor actually encourages workplace humor, whereas 40% felt that their supervisor generally accepted the expression of humor in the work setting, but did nothing to encourage or promote it. Of the 48 workers sampled, only 1 indicated that their supervisor actually discourages humor in the workplace.

In analyzing the employment of humor from the second perspective, the data suggests that humor appears to exist in some form in most organizations. However, the level at which humor is expressed appears to be moderated by the type of organization (i.e., manufacturing, research and development, or service). The data suggest that humor is more likely to be expressed only between coworkers of equal grade or job level in manufacturing organizations, while in service organizations it is more likely to be expressed between coworkers, supervisors and top management. In research and development organizations, humor is more likely expressed freely, not only within the organization, but between the organization and its customers. Serving as another indicator of the extent to which humor is expressed in the workplace, survey respondents perceived that they exercise their sense of humor less frequently in the workplace than they do outside of the workplace.

In addressing the forms in which humor exists in the workplace, we relied upon the examples provided by the survey respondents. A complete listing of these examples can be found at Appendix C. Some examples of the forms in which humor exists in the organizations surveyed include:

- 1) Joke/story telling
- 2) Use of humorous props
- 3) Humorous bulletin boards/newsletters
- 4) On-line humor databases
- 5) Annual talent shows
- 6) Office wide distribution of cartoons
- 7) Humor injected into presentations
- 8) White board for employee use and expression of humor

**5.2.3 Workplace Humor and Productivity.** The data indicate workers overwhelmingly (94%) perceive that humor has some effect on productivity, either positive or negative. Respondents were given the opportunity to rate both the extent to which humor may enhance productivity, and the extent to which humor may inhibit productivity; thus it was possible for the respondent to characterize humor as having the ability to both significantly enhance and slightly inhibit productivity. In assessing the perceived effect of humor on productivity, we found that 52% of those surveyed felt that humor can *significantly* enhance productivity, while another 27% felt that it can *moderately* enhance productivity. At the same time, 43% indicated that they felt that humor had *no negative impact* on productivity, and 37% said that humor can *slightly inhibit* productivity. It is interesting to note that younger respondents (under age 35) were more likely to perceive humor as inhibiting productivity to some degree.

**5.2.4 Workplace Humor and Creativity.** The data indicates that workers overwhelmingly (90%) perceive that humor has some effect on creativity as well, either positive or negative. As was the case with productivity, respondents were given the opportunity to simultaneously rate the extent to which humor may enhance creativity, and the extent to which humor may inhibit creativity. In assessing the perceived effect of

humor on creativity, we found that 58% of those surveyed felt that humor can *significantly* enhance creativity, with another 14% feeling that it can *very significantly* enhance creativity. 65% indicated that they felt that humor had *no negative impact* on creativity, and 23% said that humor can *slightly inhibit* productivity. It is interesting to note that 80% of the respondents who felt that humor had no effect on creativity were male. Similarly, 75% of black respondents felt that humor could only *slightly enhance* creativity.

**5.2.5 Workplace Humor and Other Factors.** The vast majority of the respondents indicated definite agreement with the beliefs that humor can reduce stress (94%), build workgroup cohesion (74%), reduce tension between workers and management (77%), reduce tension between coworkers (81%), increase morale (75%), and defuse tense situations (68%). It is interesting to note that respondents from manufacturing organizations exhibited less conviction in humor's ability to defuse tense situations, whereas individuals from service organizations expressed a relatively high degree of conviction; individuals from research and development organizations exhibited a level of conviction in between the other two.

### **5.3 Recommendations**

Based on the results of this research effort, humor seems to offer considerable potential as a management tool. It was the feeling of the majority of our respondents that humor was not only acceptable in the workplace, but represented a viable means for managers to enhance workplace productivity and creativity. Humor was also acknowledged by our respondents as having a definite potential to reduce stress, build workgroup cohesion, reduce tension in the workplace, increase morale, and defuse tense situations. Humor was credited in our open ended questions with improving the work environment and facilitating employee/customer relations.

Given the multiple benefits that the survey respondents associated with workplace humor and the low initial costs to management in encouraging workplace humor, we recommend that all managers seriously consider the applicability of humor to their organization. Humor has significant promise as a management tool, and encouraging humor represents a very small risk to managers. In these times of intense competition and shrinking budgets, it is imperative to take advantage of any opportunity to maximize the effectiveness of human resources.

Our survey sample did not include any Air Force, Department of Defense, or Government organizations. We recommend that a similar survey to the one at Appendix A be distributed among several governmental organizations. The survey would need to be modified to look at type of organization rather than type of industry. The purpose of such research would be to determine the perceptions of government employees towards humor, and to compare the results against those gathered in this research effort.

We also recommend continued research in the area of workplace humor, particularly in trying to demonstrate actual correlation between humor and its purported benefits. If it could be demonstrated that humor was in fact responsible for real world enhancements in productivity and creativity, managers would be much more willing to encourage it in their own organizations. We also recommend that research be conducted into *how* to best implement humor in organizations; that is, how to introduce it into an existing corporate culture for maximum effectiveness with minimum disruption.

## **Appendix A: Survey**



Workplace humor has been theorized to have many positive benefits, such as stress reduction, improved workgroup cohesion, improved worker morale, and increased worker productivity and creativity.

The objective of this research is to better understand your perceptions and attitudes toward the expression of humor in the workplace. This research is a necessary first step towards determining if humor in the workplace can result in greater workplace productivity and greater worker creativity. The information gathered will become part of an Air Force Institute of Technology research project.

This survey provides you with an opportunity to be part of a significant research undertaking. Your opinions are highly valued and are critical to the outcome of this research.

Please complete the attached questionnaire, put it in the enclosed self-addressed envelope and mail it to Captain Paul Tobin and Captain Jonathan Specht.

If you would like a copy of the results of this preliminary research project, please send this request, under separate cover, to:

Captain Paul Tobin / Capt Jonathan Specht  
AFIT/LA, Building 640  
WRIGHT-PATTERSON AFB, OH 45433

Results of this preliminary study will be available in December of 1994.

THANK YOU in advance for your participation

Captain Paul Tobin and Captain Jonathan Specht  
Air Force Institute of Technology  
Wright-Patterson AFB, OH 45433  
(513) 255-7777 ext. 2368

## CONFIDENTIALITY

Your survey has been assigned a coded number. This number is intended to assist the researchers in determining which surveys have been returned. The last section of this survey provides a place for you to indicate your name. Including your name is voluntary; however, it will enable the researchers to contact you if they have questions regarding your responses. At no time will your individual responses be released to anyone outside of the research team.

## COMPLETING THE QUESTIONNAIRE

The survey consists of several parts. Please follow the instructions for each part very carefully. **This is not a test.** The survey is fairly comprehensive which helps us to obtain as full and accurate an understanding as possible. Therefore, some questions may appear to be redundant, but this greatly improves the accuracy of the research.

Please note that we are interested in exploring the impact of humor on both **creativity** and **productivity**. As such, we have constructed the survey to ask similar questions regarding humor's impact on each of these constructs. In taking the survey, please pay close attention as to whether the questions are asking about **creativity** or **productivity**.

When answering the questions:



- PLEASE READ EACH QUESTION VERY CAREFULLY
- PLEASE ANSWER EVERY QUESTION (unless instructed otherwise).
- DO NOT SKIP QUESTIONS WITH THE INTENTION OF COMING BACK.
- MANY QUESTIONS ASK YOUR OPINION. THERE ARE NO RIGHT OR WRONG OPINIONS. WE WANT TO KNOW HOW *YOU* SEE THINGS.
- SOME QUESTIONS ASK ABOUT SENSITIVE MATTERS. NO ONE OUTSIDE OF THIS RESEARCH TEAM WILL EVER SEE YOUR INDIVIDUAL ANSWERS.
- USE A DARK PENCIL OR PEN WHEN COMPLETING YOUR ANSWERS.
- YOU MAY CROSS OUT IF YOU NEED TO CHANGE AN ANSWER.
- INSTRUCTIONS ARE PROVIDED THROUGHOUT THE QUESTIONNAIRE.

## **PLEASE READ THIS *BEFORE* COMPLETING THE SURVEY**

These terms are used throughout this short questionnaire. Please review our explanations of these terms before completing the survey, as the explanations may influence your responses.

**Humor ---** refers to the expression of what is funny, amusing, or ludicrous through speech, writing, or action. Humor in the workplace may take many forms. For example, humor may be as simple and discreet as the cartoons posted on office bulletin boards. At the other extreme, humor may exist as a result of company resources dedicated solely to the promotion of workplace humor. Some organizations have built "humor rooms" stocked with humorous videotapes and joke books so that employees may tickle their funny bones during breaks. Other organizations endorse company-wide practical jokes, while still others have high ranking company officers dressed as clowns patrolling the manufacturing floor on tricycles.

In completing this survey we encourage you to thoughtfully consider your own organization. In what forms is humor present? Are there any unique things done in your workplace to promote humor?

**Productivity ---** In general, productivity refers to the capability to perform duties abundantly and/or efficiently. If your company is a manufacturing organization, productivity could be the capability to abundantly and efficiently assemble or manufacture some product. If you are in a research and development organization, productivity could be the capability to readily generate new designs, concepts or solutions. In a service organization, productivity could refer to the capability to serve an abundant number of customers in an efficient manner. Of course, it is impossible to provide one definition of productivity that is suitable for all organizations. Therefore, these interpretations are provided only as guidelines to assist you in determining what productivity may be for your unique organization as you answer the questions in this survey.

**Creativity ---** refers to artistic or intellectual inventiveness. If your company is a manufacturing organization, creativity could be the ability to innovatively find solutions to existing problems or to make the manufactured product or process better. If you are in a research and development organization, creativity could be the ability to innovatively develop new designs, concepts, solutions, or products. In a service organization, creativity could refer to the ability to find innovative ways to serve the customer or make your job easier. Of course, like productivity, creativity is not a construct that can be adequately defined in generic terms, so these definitions are provided only as guidelines to assist you in determining what creativity may be in your specific organization as you answer the questions in this survey.

## ATTITUDE MEASURES

The following questions address your attitudes towards the use of humor in the workplace and your perceptions of its effects on productivity, creativity and other factors. Using the general definitions previously provided, please circle the number corresponding to your response for each the following questions. Space is provided at the end of each question for you to provide any comments that you would like concerning the question. Your comments are highly encouraged, but are not required.

Q-1 To what extent do *you* feel that the expression of humor in the workplace is acceptable?

- 1 TOTALLY ACCEPTABLE
- 2 MODERATELY ACCEPTABLE
- 3 SLIGHTLY ACCEPTABLE
- 4 BORDERLINE
- 5 SLIGHTLY UNACCEPTABLE
- 6 MODERATELY UNACCEPTABLE
- 7 TOTALLY UNACCEPTABLE



Comments: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Q-2 Do you feel that it is appropriate for management to actively encourage the expression of humor in the workplace during the daily work routine?

- 1 YES
- 2 NO



Comments: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



Q-3 Which statement *best* characterizes your feelings about humor in the workplace?

- 1 THERE IS NO ROOM FOR HUMOR IN THE WORKPLACE.
- 2 HUMOR IN THE WORKPLACE IS ONLY ACCEPTABLE AFTER HOURS AND DURING BREAKS.
- 3 HUMOR IN THE WORKPLACE IS ACCEPTABLE DURING THE DAILY WORK ROUTINE, BUT ON A LIMITED BASIS.
- 4 HUMOR IS ACCEPTABLE UNDER ALL BUT A FEW CIRCUMSTANCES DURING THE DAILY WORK ROUTINE.
- 5 HUMOR IN THE WORKPLACE IS ACCEPTABLE AT ALL TIMES DURING THE DAILY WORK ROUTINE.

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Q-4 Do you consider yourself as having a good sense of humor?

- 1 YES
- 2 NO



Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

Q-5 How frequently do you exercise your sense of humor *outside* of the workplace?

- 1 I NEVER EXERCISE MY SENSE OF HUMOR.
- 2 I EXERCISE MY SENSE OF HUMOR VERY INFREQUENTLY.
- 3 I EXERCISE MY SENSE OF HUMOR SOMEWHAT INFREQUENTLY.
- 4 I EXERCISE MY SENSE OF HUMOR SOMEWHAT FREQUENTLY.
- 5 I EXERCISE MY SENSE OF HUMOR VERY FREQUENTLY.
- 6 I CONSTANTLY EXERCISE MY SENSE OF HUMOR.

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Q-6 To what extent do you exercise your sense of humor *in* of the workplace?

- 1 I NEVER EXERCISE MY SENSE OF HUMOR.
- 2 I EXERCISE MY SENSE OF HUMOR VERY INFREQUENTLY.
- 3 I EXERCISE MY SENSE OF HUMOR SOMEWHAT INFREQUENTLY.
- 4 I EXERCISE MY SENSE OF HUMOR SOMEWHAT FREQUENTLY.
- 5 I EXERCISE MY SENSE OF HUMOR VERY FREQUENTLY.
- 6 I CONSTANTLY EXERCISE MY SENSE OF HUMOR.

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Attitudes Towards Humor and Productivity



Q-7 To what extent do you believe that the expression of humor in the workplace **either positively or negatively** influences productivity?

1 HAS NO EFFECT ON PRODUCTIVITY (skip to Question Q-12)

2 HAS SOME EFFECT ON PRODUCTIVITY (POSITIVE OR NEGATIVE)

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Q-8 In your opinion, to what extent does the expression of humor in the workplace *in some way* **enhance** workplace productivity?

1 DOES NOT ENHANCE PRODUCTIVITY

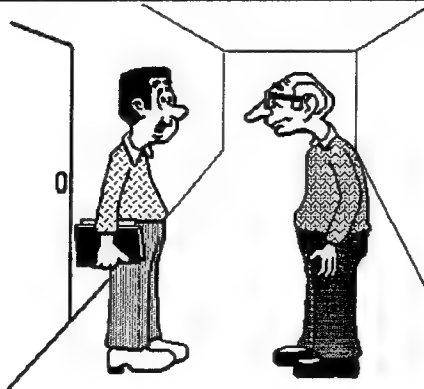
2 SLIGHTLY ENHANCES PRODUCTIVITY

3 MODERATELY ENHANCES PRODUCTIVITY

4 SIGNIFICANTLY ENHANCES PRODUCTIVITY

5 VERY SIGNIFICANTLY ENHANCES PRODUCTIVITY

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



Q-9 In your opinion, to what extent does the expression of humor in the workplace actually **inhibit** workplace productivity?

- 1 HAS NO NEGATIVE IMPACT ON PRODUCTIVITY
- 2 SLIGHTLY INHIBITS PRODUCTIVITY
- 3 MODERATELY INHIBITS PRODUCTIVITY
- 4 SIGNIFICANTLY INHIBITS PRODUCTIVITY
- 5 VERY SIGNIFICANTLY INHIBITS PRODUCTIVITY

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

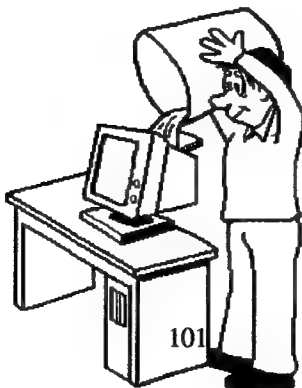
Q-10 To what extent do you believe that **management** can enhance productivity by **deliberately ensuring** that humor is present in the workplace?

- 1 MANAGEMENT CANNOT ENHANCE PRODUCTIVITY THROUGH HUMOR.
- 2 PRODUCTIVITY CAN BE SLIGHTLY ENHANCED IF MANAGEMENT ENSURES THE PRESENCE OF HUMOR.
- 3 PRODUCTIVITY CAN BE MODERATELY ENHANCED IF MANAGEMENT ENSURES THE PRESENCE OF HUMOR.
- 4 PRODUCTIVITY CAN BE SIGNIFICANTLY ENHANCED IF MANAGEMENT ENSURES THE PRESENCE OF HUMOR.
- 5 PRODUCTIVITY CAN BE VERY SIGNIFICANTLY ENHANCED IF MANAGEMENT ENSURES THE PRESENCE OF HUMOR.

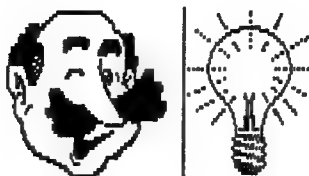
Comments: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Q-11 Please list things that the management of your organization has done to support or promote workplace humor

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



## Attitudes Towards Humor and Creativity



Q-12 To what extent do you believe that the expression of humor in the workplace **either positively or negatively** influences creativity?

- 1 HAS NO EFFECT ON CREATIVITY (skip to the section *immediately following Question Q-15*)
- 2 HAS SOME EFFECT ON CREATIVITY(POSITIVE OR NEGATIVE)

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Q-13 In your opinion, to what extent does the expression of humor in the workplace *in some way* **enhance** workplace creativity?

- 1 DOES NOT ENHANCE CREATIVITY
- 2 SLIGHTLY ENHANCES CREATIVITY
- 3 MODERATELY ENHANCES CREATIVITY
- 4 SIGNIFICANTLY ENHANCES CREATIVITY
- 5 VERY SIGNIFICANTLY ENHANCES CREATIVITY

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Q-14 In your opinion, to what extent does the expression of humor in the workplace actually **inhibit** workplace creativity?

- 1 HAS NO NEGATIVE IMPACT ON CREATIVITY
- 2 SLIGHTLY INHIBITS CREATIVITY
- 3 MODERATELY INHIBITS CREATIVITY
- 4 SIGNIFICANTLY INHIBITS CREATIVITY
- 5 VERY SIGNIFICANTLY INHIBITS CREATIVITY

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Q-15 To what extent do you believe that **management** can enhance creativity by **deliberately ensuring** that humor is present in the workplace?

- 1 MANAGEMENT CANNOT ENHANCE CREATIVITY THROUGH HUMOR.
- 2 CREATIVITY CAN BE SLIGHTLY ENHANCED IF MANAGEMENT ENSURES THE PRESENCE OF HUMOR.
- 3 CREATIVITY CAN BE MODERATELY ENHANCED IF MANAGEMENT ENSURES THE PRESENCE OF HUMOR.
- 4 CREATIVITY CAN BE SIGNIFICANTLY ENHANCED IF MANAGEMENT ENSURES THE PRESENCE OF HUMOR.
- 5 CREATIVITY CAN BE VERY SIGNIFICANTLY ENHANCED IF MANAGEMENT ENSURES THE PRESENCE OF HUMOR.

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



### Attitudes Towards Humor and Other Workplace Factors

We are interested in knowing what your attitudes are towards workplace humor, as well as what impact you feel humor in the workplace may have on various factors.

Please refer to the following scale and choose the appropriate response when answering question Q-16 about humor in the workplace:

1	2	3	4	5
Definitely Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neutral	Slightly Agree	Definitely Agree

Q-16 Do you agree that humor in the workplace has the potential to:

Reduce stress?	1	2	3	4	5
Build workgroup cohesion?	1	2	3	4	5
Reduce tension between workers and management?	1	2	3	4	5
Reduce tension between coworkers?	1	2	3	4	5
Increase morale in the workplace?	1	2	3	4	5
Defuse tense situations?	1	2	3	4	5

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Q-17 Please list any other potential *benefits* that you think can be derived from the expression of humor in the workplace.

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Q-18 Please list any potential *detriments* that you think can result from the expression of humor in the workplace.

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## HUMOR IN YOUR WORKPLACE

The following questions are designed to gather information about the nature and prevalence of humor as it exists in your work environment.

For questions Q-19 through Q-24, please refer to the following scale and choose the appropriate response:

<b>1</b> Never	<b>2</b> Sometimes	<b>3</b> Often	<b>4</b> Almost Always	<b>5</b> Always
-------------------	-----------------------	-------------------	------------------------------	--------------------

- Q-19 How often do you encounter humorous material/behavior in your workplace? 1 2 3 4 5
- Q-20 How often do you participate in humorous behavior in the workplace? 1 2 3 4 5
- Q-21 How often do you inhibit your sense of humor in the workplace? 1 2 3 4 5
- Q-22 How often are you offended by expressions of humor in your workplace? 1 2 3 4 5
- Q-23 How often do you find yourself disapproving of coworkers' attempts at humor? 1 2 3 4 5
- Q-24 How often do you actively express disapproval to your coworkers for their use of humor? 1 2 3 4 5

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

- Q-25 If you have ever been offended by attempts at humor in your workplace, what aspect of the humor or humorous behavior caused you to take offense? (e.g., sexual/racial slur, insensitive, poorly timed, derogatory, etc.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



Q-26 Which of the following best characterizes the level at which humor is expressed in your work environment?

- 1 HUMOR IS NOT EXPRESSED IN MY WORKPLACE
- 2 HUMOR IS EXPRESSED ONLY BETWEEN COWORKERS OF EQUAL GRADE/JOB LEVEL
- 3 HUMOR IS EXPRESSED BETWEEN COWORKERS AND SUPERVISORS
- 4 HUMOR IS EXPRESSED BETWEEN COWORKERS, SUPERVISORS, AND TOP MANAGEMENT
- 5 HUMOR IS EXPRESSED FREELY NOT ONLY WITHIN THE ORGANIZATION, BUT BETWEEN THE ORGANIZATION AND ITS CUSTOMERS (EXTERNALLY).

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Q-27 Which of the following *best* characterizes your immediate supervisor's treatment of humor in the workplace?



- 1 HE/SHE DISCOURAGES HUMOR IN THE WORKPLACE
- 2 HE/SHE TOLERATES HUMOR IN THE WORKPLACE
- 3 HE/SHE GENERALLY ACCEPTS, BUT DOES NOTHING TO ENCOURAGE, HUMOR IN THE WORKPLACE
- 4 HE/SHE ENCOURAGES HUMOR IN THE WORKPLACE
- 5 HE/SHE STRONGLY PROMOTES HUMOR IN THE WORKPLACE

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Q-28 Please list things that your supervisor has done or said that indicate to you his/her attitudes towards humor in the workplace (if none, so state).

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



Q-29 You express your sense of humor at work \_\_\_\_\_ you do outside of the workplace.

- 1 MORE OFTEN THAN
- 2 LESS OFTEN THAN
- 3 THE SAME AS



Comments: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### ORGANIZATIONAL BACKGROUND

**The following questions are intended to gather some general information about your organization. We are interested in determining if certain organizational characteristics influence attitudes towards and employment of humor.**

Q-30 Is your organization part of a larger company?

- 1 YES
- 2 NO

**If you answered NO to Question Q-30, please SKIP to question Q-35**

Q-31 If you answered YES to question #31, what company is your organization part of?

\_\_\_\_\_

Q-32 Approximately how many people work for this larger company, including your organization and other organizations associated with the company?

- 1 APPROXIMATELY \_\_\_\_\_ PEOPLE
- 2 I DON'T KNOW

Q-33 Do you feel that the levels of humor generally present in your organization are characteristic of the larger organization also?

- 1 YES
- 2 NO
- 3 NOT SURE

Q-34 If you answered NO to question #33, please briefly explain how you think the levels of humor are different:

---

---

---

Q-35 Approximately how many people employed by your organization work in your immediate facility (i.e., office building, plant building, store)?

- 1 APPROXIMATELY \_\_\_\_\_ PEOPLE
- 2 I DON'T KNOW

Q-36 OVERALL, how would you categorize the market in which your *company* competes?

- 1 MANUFACTURING
- 2 RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT
- 3 SERVICE
- 4 OTHER \_\_\_\_\_

Q-37 How would you categorize the OVERALL mission of *your specific work group*?

- 1 MANUFACTURING
- 2 RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT
- 3 SERVICE
- 4 OTHER \_\_\_\_\_

Q-38 What is the AVERAGE number of coworkers that you interact with on any given day?

\_\_\_\_\_ PEOPLE

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

We are interested in knowing some information about you to see how individual demographics play into the feelings towards humor at work. Please answer the following questions by either circling the appropriate answer or filling in the blanks. Remember your answers are confidential.

Q-39 Please indicate your name: (OPTIONAL)

\_\_\_\_\_

Q-40 What is your gender?

- 1 MALE
- 2 FEMALE

Q-41 What is your present age?

\_\_\_\_\_ YEARS

Q-42 What is your ethnic background?

- 1 WHITE
- 2 BLACK
- 3 HISPANIC
- 4 ASIAN/PACIFIC ISLANDER
- 5 ALASKAN NATIVE
- 6 AMERICAN INDIAN
- 7 OTHER (PLEASE SPECIFY) \_\_\_\_\_

Q-43 How long have you been in your current organization?

\_\_\_\_\_ YEARS \_\_\_\_\_ MONTHS

Q-44 How long have you been in your current position within the organization?

\_\_\_\_\_ YEARS \_\_\_\_\_ MONTHS

Q-45 What is the **HIGHEST** level of formal education that you have had?

- 1 SOME HIGH SCHOOL
  - 2 HIGH SCHOOL DEGREE
  - 3 SOME COLLEGE
  - 4 ASSOCIATES DEGREE
  - 5 BACHELORS DEGREE
  - 6 BACHELORS DEGREE PLUS
  - 7 MASTERS DEGREE
  - 8 MASTERS DEGREE PLUS
  - 9 PhD DEGREE
  - 10 OTHER (PLEASE SPECIFY)
- 

Q-46 How would you categorize your current position in the organization?

- 1 UNSKILLED LABOR
  - 2 SKILLED LABOR
  - 3 CLERICAL/SECRETARIAL
  - 4 SUPERVISORY
  - 5 LINE MANAGER
  - 6 DIVISION MANAGER
  - 7 TECHNICAL SPECIALIST
  - 8 NON-TECHNICAL SPECIALIST
  - 9 PROFESSIONAL/NON-SPECIFIC
  - 10 OTHER (PLEASE SPECIFY)
- 

**Thank you for participating in this study. Your time and input is greatly appreciated. Now, please put the questionnaire in the enclosed envelope and return it via mail to Captain Tobin and Captain Specht.**



## Appendix B: Raw Survey Data

Respondent								
Question #	LSA1	LSA3	LSA5	LSA9	LSA12	LSA13	LSA15	LSA18
1	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	1
2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
3	4	4	3	4	5	4	4	4
4	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
5	5	5	5	6	5	6	4	5
6	4	4	4	5	4	6	4	5
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8	4	4	3	3	4	5	3	4
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14	1	1		1	1	1	2	2
15	4	4		2	4	4	2	4
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16.2	4	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
16.3	4	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
16.4	4	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
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16.6	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	4
17	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#
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20	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
21	2	2	2	3	2	2	2	2
22	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	2
23	1	2	2	1	1	2	2	2
24	1	1	2	1	1	2	2	1
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26	4	4	5	5	4	5	5	5
27	4	4	3	4	4	5	3	4
28	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#
29	2	2	2	3	3	1	3	3
30	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
31	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#
32	5000			5000		5000	5000	10000
33	3	3	2	1	3	1	2	1
34	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#
35	140	200	160	180	180	200	180	180
36	3	3	1	3	3	1,3	3	3
37	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
38	20	10	30	8	20	30	20	30
39	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#
40	1	2	1	1	2	1	1	2
41	60	34	27	42	28	38	39	29
42	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	1
43	13	3	2.083	8.583	5.000	3.250	3.000	6.833
44	1	0.833	0.333	2.000	3.000	3.250	0.833	0.750
45	9	5	7	8	5	6	6	5
46	6	7	6	9	10	10	6	7

Respondent								
Question #	LSA8	LSA16	LSA7	LSA20	LSB1	LSB2	LSB6	LSB7
1	1	1	1	1	3	2	2	1
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3	4	3	4	4	3	3	4	4
4	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
5	5	4	5	6	6	4	5	5
6	5	4	5	5	3	3	4	4
7	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
8	4	3	3	3	2	3	4	4
9	2	3		2	1	1	3	2
10	4	3	2	3	3	3	3	3
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15	4	3	2	1	3	3	4	4
16.1	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
16.2	5	5	5	4	5	4	5	4
16.3	4	5	5	5	4	4	5	4
16.4	4	5	5	5	4	4	5	4
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16.6	4	5	5	4	5	4	5	4
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18	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#
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20	3	3	4	3	2	3	4	3
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27	4	4	4	5	3	3	4	4
28	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#
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34	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#
35	170	190	185	200	600		2000	4000
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37	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
38	20	10	20	30	5	20	20	50
39	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#
40	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
41	36	24	33	27	30	33	22	28
42	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	1
43	4.666	2.000	3.500	5.166	4.583	8.000	4.250	7.000
44	2.583	2.000	0.750	5.166	1.000	1.000	2.500	2.000
45	3	2	8	7	5	4	3	7
46	5	3	5	9	9	3	7	5

Respondent								
Question #	LSB10	LSB8	SSA8	SSA3	SSA5	SSA1	SSA2	SSA3
1	4	1	1	3	1	1	1	2
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4	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
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7	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
8	3	3	4	2	4	4	4	4
9	2	1	1	4	1	1	2	1
10	2	1	4	2	5	4	3	4
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13			5	2	4	4	4	4
14			1	4	1	1	1	1
15			5	2	5	4	3	4
16.1	5		5	4	5	5	5	5
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16.3	5		5	2	5	5	5	5
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38	50	10	6	5	20	30	9	15
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40	1	1	2	2	2	1	2	2
41	45	50	37	40	47	44	21	48
42	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	1
43	22.500	1.000	0.038	0.167	0.019	0.500	0.167	0.083
44	10.000	3.000	0.038	0.167	0.019	0.500	0.167	0.083
45	6	5	3	3	3	7	3	3
46	9	10	3	3	7	6	3	3

Respondent								
Question #	SSA6	SSA7	SSB2	SSB5	SSB5	SRD2	SRD4	SRD5
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6	4	5	6	4	5	4	4	5
7	1	2	2	2	2	1	2	2
8		4	5	4	5		4	4
9		2	1	1	2		4	1
10		4	5	3	5		4	4
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13		4	5	4	5		3	4
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15		4	5	4	5		3	4
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16.3	4	5	5	5	5	3	5	5
16.4	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
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16.6	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
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27	4	5	4	4	1	4	3	4
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29	1	3	3	3	2	3	3	3
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31	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#
32								
33	3	1						
34	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	
35	20		6	6	7			21
36	3	3	3	3	3	2	1	2
37	3	3	3	3	3	1	1	2
38	4	7	6	6	4	10	20	10
39	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#
40	2	2	1	1	1	1	2	1
41	30	42	45	63	31	61	52	62
42	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
43	0.038	20.750	8.000	44.000	6.000	2.000	10.000	3.417
44	0.038	0.058	6.000	14.000	6.000	2.000	10.000	3.417
45	4	10	6	4	4	2	4	3
46	3	4	9	9	7	2	9	2



Respondent								
Question #	SRD6	SRD7	SRD8	SRD9	LMA11	LMA6	LMA16	LMA13
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6	4	4	4	4	4	5	6	4
7	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
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9	1	1	2	3	2	1	1	3
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14	1	1	2	3	3	1	1	2
15	4	3	3	4	3	3	4	3
16.1	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
16.2	4	5	4	5	5	5	5	4
16.3	5	5	4	5	5	5	5	4
16.4	5	5	4	5	5	5	5	4
16.5	5	5	4	5	5	5	5	3
16.6	4	5	4	4	4	5	5	4
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24	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	2
25	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#
26	5	5	5	5	2	3	3	2
27	3	4	3	3	3	2	3	3
28	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#
29	3	3	2	2	3	3	3	2
30	2	2	2	2	1	1	1	1
31	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#
32								
33					2	3	3	2
34		#	#	#	#	#	#	#
35	35	30	40	35	700	650	750	700
36	2	1	1	2	1	1	1	1
37	2	1	3	3	1	1	3	1
38	10	25	16	10	100	40	20	30
39	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#
40	2	1	2	2	2	1	1	2
41	61	39	23	29	32	43	34	24
42	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
43	16.083	17.000	1.000	5.167	3.000	2.000	3.750	1.250
44	16.083	6.000	1.000	5.000	0.500	2.000	3.750	1.250
45	5		4	3	2	8	4	6
46	10		3	3	9	9	7	9

Respondent								
Question #	LMA9	LMA17	LMA19	LSC2	LSC9	LSC12	LSC16	LSC19
1	2	1	1	1	1	2	1	1
2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
3	4	4	3	3	3	3	4	4
4	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
5	5	5	4	5	4	5	5	6
6	4	4	4	5	4	2	3	5
7	2	2	2	2	2	1	2	2
8	2	4	2	4	3		3	4
9	2	1	1	2	2		1	2
10	2	4	1	5	2		3	3
11	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#
12	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
13	2	4	3	5	4	4	4	4
14	2	3	2	1	1	1	1	2
15	2	4	1	5		5	3	2
16.1	5	5	4	5	5	5	5	5
16.2	4	5	4	5	5	5	5	5
16.3	5	5	4	5	5	5	5	5
16.4	5	5	4	5	5	5	5	5
16.5	5	4	4	5	5	5	5	5
16.6	4	2	4	5	5	5	4	5
17	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#
18	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#
19	2	2	2	3	3	1	4	3
20	2	3	3	3	3	3	2	5
21	3	3	2	2	3	1	2	2
22	2	2	1	2	2	1	1	1
23	2	2	1	2	2	1	1	1
24	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	1
25	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#
26	2	2	5	2	3	2	2	4
27	3	3	3	3	4	2	3	4
28	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#
29	2	2	2	3	3	2	2	3
30	1	1	1	1	2	2	1	2
31	#	#	#	#	#		#	#
32		4000000						
33	2	2	3	3			3	
34	#	#	#	#			#	#
35	700	750	700	40			35	
36	1	1	1	3	3	3	3	3
37	1	1	3	3	3	3	3	3
38	20	176	50	20	15	40	15	10
39	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#
40	1	1	2	2	2	1	2	2
41	27	44	44	25	33	25	28	28
42	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
43	2.250	5.500	0.417	0.833	3.250	1	2.5	0.5
44	2.250	4.000	0.417	0.833	3.250	1	2.5	0.5
45	5	4	3	7	7	3	7	7
46	9	6	3	9	9	10?	9	9

## **Appendix C: Survey Comment Directory**

All comments have been reproduced as originally written on the surveys. The following legend associates each comment with the size and industry type of the organization from which it originated. The numbers in the identifiers correspond to the survey numbers on the original surveys.

### **LEGEND**

LSA = Large Service Organization "A"  
LSB = Large Service Organization "B"  
LSC = Large Service Organization "C"  
SSA = Small Service Organization "A"  
SSB = Small Service Organization "B"  
SRD = Small Research and Development Organization  
LMA = Large Manufacturing Organization

### **O-1**

LSA-3 - I would like it to be totally acceptable. However, My organization is quite acceptable in comparison to other places I have worked.

LSA-8- Humor is a part of life; it will naturally find its way into the workplace. It is totally acceptable, as a part of life.

LSA-16 - With or by using humor with different customers makes each one unique in their own way, so it increases and enhances the personal relationship.

SSA-3 - We would not want to lose our professionalism, some people can't contain humor once given an open door.

SSA-5 - Why not - life is too stressful anyway. Humor opens up communications and Ideas.

SSA-8 - Smiling faces make everyone smile in return.

LMA-06 - Certain situations may call for subdued behavior & humor could be deemed inappropriate.

LMA-11 - (1) But not at our company. (you need humor as a way of relieving stress.)

LMA-13 - Humor should be tactful and non-prejudiced.

LMA-16 - Humor is a way of Expressing ourselves.

LMA-17 - Humor is good for reducing stress and elevating boredom.

SRD- 9 - As long as it doesn't go overboard.

LSC-19 - (1) As long as it doesn't go too far; ie, posted inappropriately where clients may see it or when it effects productivity negatively.

## **Q-2**

LSA-15 - (Answered yes) This answer is more that if someone enjoys using humor in work situations it should not be discouraged.

LSA-18 - The best way is to *role model* the use of and appreciation of humor. It would not be good to mandate humor or try to structure it too much since every person's taste and style of humor is different.

LSA-20 - By "actively encourage", I would just clarify this to mean that management allows free humor expression, not necessarily demands it.

SSA-3 - Again, some people are tactless in their efforts to be humorous which can harm the work place reather than enhance it.

SSA-8 - This lessens stress and anger over mistakes or rude customers.

LSB-2 - Helps ease the stress of a heavy workload.

LSB-6 - All work and no play makes "Jack" a dull boy. Dull is not synonymous with creative.

LMA-09 - Need to relax atmosphere just enough to relieve stress and increase productivity.

LMA-11 - (1) As long as its not offensive.

LMA-13 - A workplace is professional and employees should be encouraged to be serious, but not at all times.

LMA-16 - Happy workers are more productive. Companies would benefit.

LMA-17 - As long as the humor doesn't offend or isn't at the expense of others.

LMA-19 - Possibly "Allow" instead of "encourage". Because of so many personality types, sometimes what is humorous to others will cause hurt feelings to somebody who is sensitive. If management allows/actively ecourages humor, it must also encourage tact/consideration. Any good thing should not be taken to the extreme.

LSC-12 - Laughter is the best medicine.

SRD- 9 - I don't think they should discourage it, but I don't think they should actively encourage it, either.

## **Q-3**

LSA-13 - Physical (defined as 1)"horseplay" or 2) Making fun of physical appearance) is never acceptable.

LSA-16 - In order to be productive you have to keep it under control.

LSA-20 - As wit all emotion-based forms of communication, there are appropriate and inappropriate times.

SSA-3 - It can be inappropriate if overheard by the consumers, patronage, or people you service.

SSA-7 - Sometimes someone laughing could offend an already upset patient.

SSA-8 - Hurt feelings are to be avoided.

LMA-11 - As long as its not hurtful humor.

LSC-12 - No sexual harassment.

#### **Q-4**

SSA-3 - At an appropriate time and place.

#### **Q-5**

SSA-3 - It is healthy t be able to smile and enjoy life but like anything it must be done in moderation. Unless it is your profession to be funny.

#### **Q-6**

LSA-3 - I moderate my sense of humor in the workplace more than I moderate it outside the workplace. I believe that co-workers could take me less seriouully if I joked as much as I want to.

LSA-7 - If I didn't, I would probably go insane.

LSC-19 - I find it helps others and the extent to which I exercise my humor has never been negatively commented on by my supervisors or peers, in fact I've been praised for it.

#### **Q-7**

LSA-3 -By breaking the tension and stress it allows me to take a minute to laugh - then return to work.

LSA-15 - Based on the situation it can effect the productivity positively or negatively

SSA-3 - Positive when there has been a stress factor (deadlines, etc), imposed on the workplace that isn't the norm of the workplace (helps release tension)

SSA-5 - Eases Tedium.

LSB-2 - Creates a more productive atmosphere.

LSB-6 - As long as the ability to express humor is not taken advantage of - the effect can be productive. If employees are in a good mood, they are likely to enjoy the work they are doing more. Enjoying the work means taking pride in it for most people.

LMA-6 - It can provide a more relaxed atmosphere and foster better relationships.

LMA-19 - Overall morale is an important factor. If morale is up, humor is appreciated more.

SRD-5 - Positive.

LSC-16 - Positive.

LSC-19 - Negatively when used inappropriately.

## **Q-8**

LSA-3 - When you can have fun together, you can work better together.

LSA-20 - Makes people feel like they're in a more open atmosphere, which in turn makes them likely to contribute ideas and be motivated.

LSA-18 - Humor can help you remember and organize new information. Humor can help you keep perspective on what's truly important. Humor can help you not be so worried about being perfect.

SSA-3 - It can enhance competitiveness and a sense of belonging as long as it's tasteful and general.

SSB-4 - Morale is increased! thus productivity is increased.

LMA-11 - It gets creative juices flowing.

LMA-13 - Humor can put people in a good cooperative mood.

LMA-16 - Humor perks people up.

LSC-19 - Helps ya hang in there to the end of the day some days and get over the hump to the next client.

SRD-4 - Releases tension/pressure.

## **Q-9**

LSA-3 - If taken to an extreme, it may hinder productivity

LSA-5 - Humor during inappropriate times is avoiding key issues which need to be addressed.

LSA-9 - This, of course, depends on specifics. "Humorous" ridicule of personnel under some circumstances is counterproductive.

LSA-13 - IF approved of (answered #1, has no negative impact of productivity)

LSA-15 - Based on improper or negative humor. (answered "slightly inhibits productivity")

LSA-18 - Certain kinds of inconsiderate humor can squelch people's ideas. Humor that turns into tangents can waste time.

LSA-20 - It could, if taken to extremes all the time. (slightly inhibit productivity)

SSA-3 - If its part of the normal daily performance. If is attacks a particular religion, sex, or person. It can be distracting, causing lack of attention and reduction of work.

SSA-3a - Unless excessive.

SSA-7 - Occassionally might distract a person from their job for a short period of time.

LSB-6 - If an employee decides to spend all of his/her time being the office jester, and devotes minimal time to his/her work, productivity is that case would be non-existent.

LSB-10 - Humor can have a negative impact on productivity if expressed excessively (all day, every day)

LMA-11 - only inhibits a small portion.

LMA-13 - Humor can distract people or sometimes make people uncomfortable.

LMA-19 - (1) Not as long as humor is expressed in a good way.

LSC-19 - (2) If it gets out of hand.

SRD-4 - Humor helps but don't get carried away.

### **Q-10**

LSA-7 - I would agree more stronly about this if the word "ensures" was changed to "supports" or "improves".

SSA-3 - Management's professionalism would contain the abuse of humor in the workplace (because work is a place where you go to perform a responsibility, develop and become "an expert" in that trade but its also considered a second home to some, which you should enjoy going to.

SSB-4 - Good sense of humor between management and other employees creates friendly atmosphere.

LMA-6 - Management may be able to create an atmosphere of humor, but the amount of productivity increase is hard to determine.

LMA-16 - People will work better if they are happy.

LMA-19 - I don't think it is possible for management to ensure the presence of Humor! However, if top management members reveal their "human" side, with humor, lower-echelon members will feel more comfortable doing the same thing.

LSC-19 - (3) w/ management involved could possibly ensure negative impact.

## O-11

LSA-3 - We have an annual talent show which allows for employee humor.

- Our president uses humor in his presentations to the company
- Employees cut up cartoons
- We have a white board in our cafeteria that asks humorous questions we can

respond

to.

LSA-5 - Staff lounge bulletin board

- "Office Faxes"
- Joke telling be senior management
- Senior management lead by example

LSA-7 - The whole atmosphere here is relaxed and open. Humor is a natural part of our work setting.

LSA-8- Whiteboard in the staff lounge promotes exchange of ideas, humorous stories, etc. several electronic databases encourage discussion, exchange of ideas.

LSA-12 - We have a "white board" in the lunch room where someone writes a silly comment/question to provoke others to write wild 'n' crazy responses. In daily work-life people are able to be relaxed and funny without fear of management, in fact, in meetings many of the managers allow their senses of humor to show.

LSA-13 - On-Line jokes database; shared humor via email, etc. Frequent cartoons.

LSA-9 - Management supports electronic expressions of employee humor

LSA-15 - Show by example that humor can be incorporated into the workplace.

LSA-16 - We have annual talent shows and we also have a joke database specifically for people to tell jokes.

LSA-18 - They use humor. They show appreciation of humor.

LSA-20 - They exhibit humor themselves, they don't put down people who are humorous, etc.

SSB-4 - Nothing!

SSB-5 - Telling of jokes -cartoons - teasing jokingly

SSA-1 - Distributing humorous faxed cartoons. Joke telling. Funny anecdotes shared with all.

SSA-2 - They make jokes and laugh a lot.

SSA-3 - N/A othre than he is a fair in his dealing with people and has a pleasant personality, but professional of his action.

SSA-3a - Makes faces behind superior's backs.

SSA-5 - They use their sense of humor - gain our respect.

SSA-7 - Encourages us to joke and laugh. Seems to be hiring people with an obvious sense of humor.

SSA-8 - Too new to say, but the personnel is great.

LSB-1 - Nothing.



LSB-2 - Using the Snoopy mascot and Peanuts gang to advertise and promote humor at social events.

LSB-6 - Previously, I worked for a person who would occasionally place plastic spiders/frogs on a desk at random. Also, funny stories and personal anecdotes are always welcome.

LSB-10 - The management of my organization does nothing to promote workplace humor.

LMA-9 - Nothing.

LMA-13 - Encourage participation in community activities.

LMA-16 - None.

LMA-19 - I'm new here. Co-workers have been friendly and helpful. They (and my boss, as well) have mentioned personal anecdotes, thus encouraging a relaxed atmosphere open to humor.

LSC-2 - Places cartoons, funny job listings on bulletin board.

LSC-19 - Join in; praise those who use it as an "interpersonal tool."

SRD-4 - By allowing pleasant and comfortable working conditions and atmosphere.

SRD-5 - Bulletin Board; Newsletter; Personal Involvement.

SRD-6 - News Letter; Pictures and Cartoons Posted on Bulletin Board.

SRD-7 - Parties, Cartoons on Bulletin Boards.

SRD-9 - Management does not actively promote office humor.

## **O-12**

LSA-15 - Based on how the creative person perceives or uses humor.

SSA-3 - Positive if your trade depends and centers around humor or fun - or children especially children of today who needs humor related to love and acceptance But adults in a business minded profession can be distractful and unproductive.

SRD-6 - Positive Effect.

LMA-17 - Creates positive energy, and reduces stress and promotes efficiency.

LMA-19 - Humor may enhance a relaxed atmosphere, reduce judgemental attitudes. This allows creativity to flow more freely.

LSC-19 - (2) POS: Humor = thought = possibility for creativity.

NEG: Too much time spent on the humor = less time to think creatively/  
apply  
creativity to other things.

### **Q-13**

LSA-3 - Being Humorous is creative!

LSA-15- This depends on how the individuals use humor.

LSA-18 - Humor stirs up creativity juices.

SSA-3 - It relax your mindset giving you the opportunity to think positive, explore improvement.

SSA-7 - Stimulates the brain and relieves tension so you can think better.

### **Q-14**

LSA-7 - It's only negative if people "laugh at" creative ideas.

LSA-15 - Depends on how person perceives humor.

LSA-18 - Only if the humor is at someone else's expense can I see it inhibiting creativity.

SSA-3 - Breaks concentration; bring about animosity (if aggressively used); display unprofessionalism (if used at inappropriate times); Brings about a lackadaisical concern for performance.

LSB-6 - (1), Unless you are dealing with an employee with no sense of humor, and/or no initiative.

LMA-17 - Only if it becomes vulgar or offensive.

LMA-19 - It can be too distracting if not handled properly.

### **Q-15**

LSA-7 - Ditto comment of Q-10.

LSA-20 - I'm not sure that someone could cause me to be more creative by them being humorous or encouraging humor.

LMA-11 - It gets creative juices flowing.

LMA-17 - Humor eliminates stress and promotes creativity and harmony between workers.

LMA-19 - Management cannot officially ensure humor! But they can encourage and promote an atmosphere that is conducive to friendly and supportive staff.

### **Q-16**

LSA-5 - Defusing tense situations isn't always good.

LSA-18 - *Sometimes* it might not be appropriate to use humor to defuse tense situations. (ex) someone being given a bad review or being fired - using humor would belittle the situation. But humor would be good say if there had just been an argument or stalemate.

SSA-1 - Humor in stressful healthcare situations is a must!

LSB-6 - As long as the humor is not offensive to another party, or forced upon a party who is unwilling to participate.

LSB-7 - Jokes etc. can offend people. May seem like the manager supervisor doesn't take the situation/problem seriously.

LSC-19 - (5's) I've seen it happen!

LMA-19 - If handled the right way!

## **Q-17**

LSA-7 - Build cohesion with clients

Establish co-people identity

Attract new employees.

LSA-8- Freedom to express way-out ideas, encouraging brainstorming, leads to effective problem solving.

LSA-12 - Many of us would like to use mild humor in writing our training manuals; however, management will not approve this as it would not be viewed as professional by our public. This stifles our creativity.

LSA-13 - Improved health, less lost days, just plain pleasant working conditions.

LSA-18 - Belittling serious situations in some cases (see q-16) Wasted time if the humor turns into an extended tangent from the business at hand.

SSB-5 - Makes personnel relaxed and less stressed.

SSA-1 - Truly a stress reducer!

SSA-2 - Everyone gets along better and enjoys coming to work more.

SSA-3 - If use tactfully and moderately it can bring about a sense of acceptance.

SSA-3a - Humor relaxes outsiders - makes them feel you are happy to see them.

SSA-5 - Work is much more enjoyable for all.

SSA-8 - healthy attitudes.

LSB-1 - Employees would probably feel less stress if they could laugh with their boss.

LSB-6 - Increased desire to come to work; Increased chances of providing good customer service (If the employee feels good - he/she will be more apt to make others feel good, thus they will try harder to solve the customer's problems.

LMA-9 - Learn more about co-workers, this makes for better relationships.

LMA-11 - As humor reduces stress its better for you health and makes the day go by faster and with ease.

LMA-13 - Sets people at ease.

LMA-16 - Reduce absentees.

LMA-17 - Increase in Quality & Quantity. Higher attendance; less turnover; less time loss training and replacing (people).

LMA-19 - Increased self esteem of employees.

SSA-7 - Increases the ease of working together.

LSC-12 - Relieve any stress in the office.

SRD-4 - Better health w/ less stress.

SRD-7 - All listed in Q-16.

### **Q-18**

LSA-3 - Inappropriate use of humor can hurt someone's feelings.

LSA-5 - Humor can't be used as a form of avoidance.

LSA-7 - Could distract people from tasks; could be used in inappropriate settings (ie, w/ clients); could be misconstrued; could inhibit a person who is naturally old "serious" character; could turn to "laughing at"; could be an avoidance technique.

LSA-8- Party time atmosphere: as long as people set limits for themselves...

LSA-9 - Insulting, degrading some workers

LSA-12 - None.

LSA-13 - If the business is poorly run, the humor can call attention to this to the point of employee resignation.

LSA-16 - It could get out of hand and someone could take a joke the wrong way.

LSA-20 - "wrong place" or the "wrong time" has to be understood.

SSB-4 - Humor could inhibit concentration in delicate circumstances.

SSB-5 - Timing is necessary.

SSA-1 - Patients and families perceive a "lack of caring" attitude.

SSA-3 - Offensive humor could bring about physical violence and stress, and immoral behavior.

SSA-3a - Excessive humor can make someone with real burdens feel you don't care and that you don't take them seriously.

SSA-7 - None.

SSA-8 - Hurt feelings due to someone's lack of sense of humor.

LSB-2 - Some people definitely do not possess a sense of humor and might be offended by a sensitive jibe.

LSB-6 - Humor that is racial, sexual, religious, etc... in nature can be well intended but perceived as offensive. This can cause serious problems - harassment claims...

LSB-7 - Jokes etc. can offend people and border on sex harassment. Racial slurs, etc. - innuendos are often "misunderstood". May seem like the manager/supervisor doesn't take situation/problem seriously.

LMA-9 - Too much humor reduces certain amounts of professionalism and productivity.

LMA-13 - People would make each-other the jokes.

LMA-16 - None.

LMA-17 - Some people could take offense or be offensive if not managed or limited by guidelines.

LMA-19 - Some people are overly sensitive. Others can be insensitive. Humor can be unpredictable and have unpredictable results.

LSC-2 - When it interrupts patient care. When it is at someone's expense.

LSC-19 - Misunderstandings stemming from another part of one's personality & these (?) personality differences expressed to/at others.

SRD-4 - Too much humor could cause problems (Safety hazard, too much communications w/ not enough work)

SRD-7 - Expression of Humor may be offensive to some employees.

SRD-8 - Someone's feelings can be hurt.

SRD- 9 - Someone can be offended by a "joke". With all of the silly lawsuits these days it is very possible.

#### **Os 19-24**

LSA-18 - I would like even more humor at work. We seem *too busy* sometimes to see/create humor.

#### **O-25**

LSA-3 - Sexual, derogatory

LSA-5 - Racial

LSA-7 - Any of the above could offend me; sexual/racial slurs seldom occur here.

LSA-13 - All of the above.

LSA-15 - Sexual/Racial slur, poorly timed, insensitive.

LSA-18 - The humor was insensitive -based on gossip about people.

LSA-20 - Off the subject or too time-consuming

SSB-4 - Derogatory comment toward religious beliefs.

SSB-5 - Poorly timed and slur.

SSA-1 - Racial slur or sexual slurs of opposite sex is a no-no!

SSA-3 - Sexual - male co-work female jokes. Derogatory, foul, profane language.

SSA-3a - Racial slurs always offend me.

SSA-7 - Racial or sexual slur, insulting to someone, bad timing.

SSA-8 - Racial slur, poorly timed, insensitive.

LSB-2 - Sexual and Racial Slurs.

LSB-8 - Sometimes am offended and disapprove of racial/ethnic jokes, which I neither repeat.

LSB-10 - The humor was derogatory.

LMA-06 - Racial, Poor Taste, Derogatory.

LMA-9 - Poorly timed - in front of wrong people that you need to show definite professionalism.

LMA-11 - Derogatory - cutting people down is a big NO/NO in my book.

LMA-13 - Sexual/derogatory.

LMA-17 - Vulgar language or company derogatory (slam company) and destruction of company property.

LMA-19 - I refuse to be a part of derogatory humor.

LSC-2 - Racial slurs, "women" jokes.

LSC-16 - Poorly Timed.

SRD-6 - Humor should always be in good taste - Never used to put someone down - Never Sexual/Racial, Insensitive or Derogatory.

SRD-8 - Insensitive.

SRD-9 - Derogatory toward someone or their work performance.

## **Q-26**

LSA-18 - Humor is expressed within our organization and with customers, but often with caution and discretion until the combination of people is well known.

LMA-06 - Some people do not feel that joking with top management is appropriate.

## **Q-27**

LMA-11 - Most departments its not acceptable. I got a good humored boss.

## **Q-28**

LSA-3 - By example

LSA-7 - Laughing her butt off on most available occasions! Deliberately phrasing communications in a humorous manner.

LSA-8- We all have humorous nicknames for each other.

LSA-12 - They enjoy laughing, telling jokes, and even say witty comments in meetings.

LSA-13 - Shared self-deprecation, toys, (executive stress relievers), etc.

LSA-15 - He has often told me that my injection of humor in mgt meetings keeps everything in perspective.

LSA-16 - My manager has said she likes us to have fun.

LSA-18 - She laughs a lot. She uses humor. She appreciates our humor.

SSA-2 - He's usually always laughing and joking around with us.

SSA-3 - Laugh at jokes being told; told racial distasteful jokes; initiated some form of humor themselves.

SSA-5 - shows own sense of humor.

SSA-7 - Freely teases co-workers and self, does not hesitate to joke with people.

SSA-8 - None.

LSB-1 - If the group is laughing you hear nothing from the supervisor they don't even try to see what has transpired.

LSB-2 - Displays occasional sense of humor.

LSB-6 - There has never been a discussion of humor in the workplace that I know about. Nevertheless, my manager participates freely in humor in the workplace.

LSB-7 - He is often the one to be joking.

LSB-8 - None.

LSB-10 - My supervisor occasionally laughs but is generally a mean and vindictive person.

SSB-4 - No sense of humor, this discourages others to express humor.

LMA-06 - He does not condone "visiting" or casual conversation.

LMA-9 - Often makes small, jabbing remarks to subordinates.

LMA-11 - My boss is Jap. he says funny thing and asks us to explain.

LMA-13 - Nothing.

LMA-16 - Makes Humorous Comments.

LMA-17 - Listen and sometimes laughs at humor and finds humor in situations but wishes not to be obvious to his superiors.

LMA-19 - He shares humorous anecdotes about personal and business life.

LSC-2 - None.

LSC-19 - Praised my efforts/humor sends out cartoons now and then.

SRD-4 - he does some humorous statements with co-workers - but does not start humor.

SRD-8 - None.

SRD- 9 - Will occasionally joke - but does not go overboard.

### **Q-29**

LSA-3 - See Question 6 comments.

SSA-3 - Work is just what it states, WORK, not a comedy stage. (a smile, a pleasant word, or just plain general human love, communication, works just as well as humor.

LSB-1 - Obviously you are more relaxed with your peers and know you won't be judged where it could affect your ratings.

LSB-6 - I am me - the same person 24 hours a day, 7 days a week! ;-)

### **Q-33**

LSA-18 - YES - almost all of it is very humorous.

### **Q-34**

LSA-5 - Ziff is more conservative.

LSA-15 - The larger organization's culture is very stringent and work oriented.

LSB-10 - My company has been downsizing and morale is low.

LMA-9 - Older management, different cultural background not as much humor in our company.

LMA-11 - In Japan they are by the book strict.

LMA-13 - In Japan Everything is serious! No jokes at work are permitted!

### **DEMOGRAPHICS**

LSA1: 60WM, 13Y, 1Y, 9, 6

LSA3: 34WF, 3y, 10m, 5, 7

LSA5: 27WM, 2Y1m, 4M, 7, 6

LSA7: 33WF, 3Y6m, 9M, 8, 5

LSA8: 36WF, 4Y8m, 2Y7m, 3, 5

LSA9: 42WM, 8Y7m, 2Y, 8, 9

LSA12: 28WF, 5Y, 3Y, 5, Sr. tech writer

LSA13: 38WM, 3Y3m, 3Y3m, 6, 10(logistics management)

LSA15: 39BM, 3Y, 10M, 6, 6

LSA16: 24WF, 2Y, 2Y, 2, 10(administrative)

LSA18: 29WF, 6Y10m, 9M, 5, 7

LSA20: 27 WF, 5Y2m, 5Y2m, 7, 9(trainer, computers)

SSB2: 45WM, 8Y, 6Y, 6, 9

SSB4: 31WM, 6Y, 6Y, 4, 7

SSB5: 63WM, 44Y, 14Y, 4, 9(owner and manager)

SSA1: 44WM, 6M, 6M, 7, 6

SSA2: 21WF, 2M, 2M, 4, 3

SSA3: 40 BF, \_\_, \_\_, 3, 3

SSA3a: 48WF, 1M, 1M, 3, 3

SSA5: 47 WF, 1wk, 1wk, 3/LPN degree, 9

SSA6: 30WF, 2wk, 2wk, 4, 3

SSA7: 42WF, 20Y9m, 3weeks, 10(diploma degree in nursing), 10(RN - team coordinator)

SSA8: 37 WF, 2weeks, 2weeks, 3, 3



LSB1: 30WF, 4Y5m, 1Y, 5, 9  
LSB2: 33 BF, 8Y, 1Y, 4, 3  
LSB6: 22BF, 4Y3m, 2Y6m, 3, 9(Human resources specialist)  
LSB7: 28 WF, 7Y, 2Y, 7, 5  
LSB8: 50 WF, 1Y, 3Y, 5, "Vice President".  
LSB10: 45WM, 22Y6m, 10Y, 6, 9

LMA6:43WM, 2Y, 2Y, 8, 9  
LMA9: 27WM, 2Y3m, 2Y3m, 5, 9  
LMA11: 32WF, 3Y, 6M, 2, 9  
LMA13: 24 WF, 1Y3m, 1Y3m, 6, 9(Engineer)  
LMA16: 34WM, 3Y8m, 3Y8m, 4, 7  
LMA17: 44WM, 5Y6m, 4Y, 4, 6  
LMA19: 44WF, 0Y5m, 0Y5m, 3, 10 (Administrative Assistant)

LSC2: 25WF, 10M, 10M, 7, 9 (Professional/Speech language pathologist)  
LSC12: 25WM, 1Y, 1Y, (3,4), 9  
LSC16: 28WF, 2Y6m, 2Y6m, 7, 9  
LSC19: 28WF, 6m, 6m, 7, 9

SRD2: 61WM, 2Y, 2Y, 2, 2  
SRD4: 52WF, 10Y, 10Y, 4, 9  
SRD5: 62WM, 3Y5m, 3Y5m, 3, 2  
SRD6: 61 WF, 16Y1m, 16Y1m, 5, 10 (Payroll, Taxes, Benefits)  
SRD7: 39WM, 17Y, 6Y, \_\_, \_\_  
SRD8: 23WF, 1Y, 1Y, 4, 3  
SRD9: 29 WF, 5Y2m, 5Y0m, 3, 3 (accounting)

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### **Vita - Captain Jonathan R. Specht**

Captain Specht was born in Rochester, New York, on 12 March 1966. He graduated in the top 5% of his class from West Irondequoit High School, Rochester, NY in 1984. After being awarded a four-year Air Force ROTC scholarship, he attended Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in Troy, NY, and graduated in 1988 with a BS in Mechanical Engineering and a minor in Communications.

Captain Specht entered active duty in October, 1988, and completed Undergraduate Controller Training at Tyndall AFB, Florida, in January 1989. He was then assigned to the 607th TCTS at Luke AFB in Glendale, Arizona, as an Air Weapons Director, and graduated from the Air Force's 407L CRC/CRP Air Weapons Controller Course in April 1989. Capt Specht then worked as Operations Central Director for the 607th, during which time he spent many months in Central and South America in support of the President's counter-narcotics initiative. In March 1991 Capt Specht was selected to provide adversary support at the Air Force's Fighter Weapons School at Nellis AFB, NV. Later that year he supported First Article Test on the Air Force's Modular Control Equipment for five months at Litton Data Systems, Van Nuys, CA. In December, 1991 he graduated from the Air Force's 407L Air Weapons Controller Positional Instructor Course and was upgraded to Instructor Air Weapons Director. Upon his return from South America in February 1992, he became the Chief, Mission Scheduling for the 607th ACS. He was assigned to the Air Force Institute of Technology in May 1993.

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## **Vita - Captain Paul D. Tobin**

Captain Tobin was born in Burlington, Vermont, on 11 November 1966. He was a highly distinguished graduate of Lamoille Union High School in Hyde Park, Vermont, in 1985. Captain Tobin attended the University of Vermont on a four-year Air Force ROTC scholarship, graduating in 1989 with a Bachelor of Science Degree in Mathematics.

Upon entering active duty in October of 1989, Captain Tobin was assigned to the Low Altitude Navigation and Targeting Infra-Red system for Night (LANTIRN) System Program Office (SPO) at Wright-Patterson AFB, Ohio. He first served as a Plans and Programming Officer in the directorate of Program Control where he was responsible for assembling and coordinating the Acquisition Executive Monthly Report (AEMR) for the Program Director. After six months in Program Control, Captain Tobin became a Project Manager for the LANTIRN Targeting System, responsible for environmental qualification testing, reliability qualification testing, and hardware acceptance testing. He was also responsible for all engineering change proposals and the resulting requalification and retrofit of hardware. Additionally, he served as the on-site liaison for the initial Targeting System beddown at Nellis AFB, Luke AFB, and Osan AB in South Korea. He also served as a team member on the LANTIRN Field Reliability Measurement team established and managed by Headquarters Air Combat Command to assess the reliability of the full-up LANTIRN System under operational conditions.

Captain Tobin was assigned to AFIT in May 1993, and has been assigned to Los Angeles Air Force Base upon graduation.

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13. ABSTRACT (Maximum 200 words)

Today's business literature is filled with discussions of the many benefits humor can bring to the work environment. Two of these purported benefits, namely, the enhancement of workplace productivity and the enhancement of workplace creativity, have attracted the attention of modern managers challenged with keeping their organizations competitive despite dwindling financial and human resources. Unfortunately, little research has been done to date which actually demonstrates a link between the existence of workplace humor and improved levels of productivity and creativity. Without this demonstration of causality, most managers are reluctant to invest corporate resources in pursuit of workplace humor despite its many purported advantages. As a first step to establishing this relationship, the focus of this exploratory research was to assess the level of employee and management acceptance of workplace humor and to evaluate employee opinions regarding humor's potential to enhance productivity and creativity. The research also evaluated the effect of various moderating variables, including organizational size, type of industry, gender, age and employee level. Using data gathered via a mail survey, the researchers employed Chi-Square contingency table analyses to evaluate the effects of these moderating variables on employee attitudes regarding workplace humor. The study provides a foundation for further research into the relationship between workplace humor and productivity and creativity.

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